MASTERS PREVIEW

Augusta's 5 Most Frightening Putts P. 72

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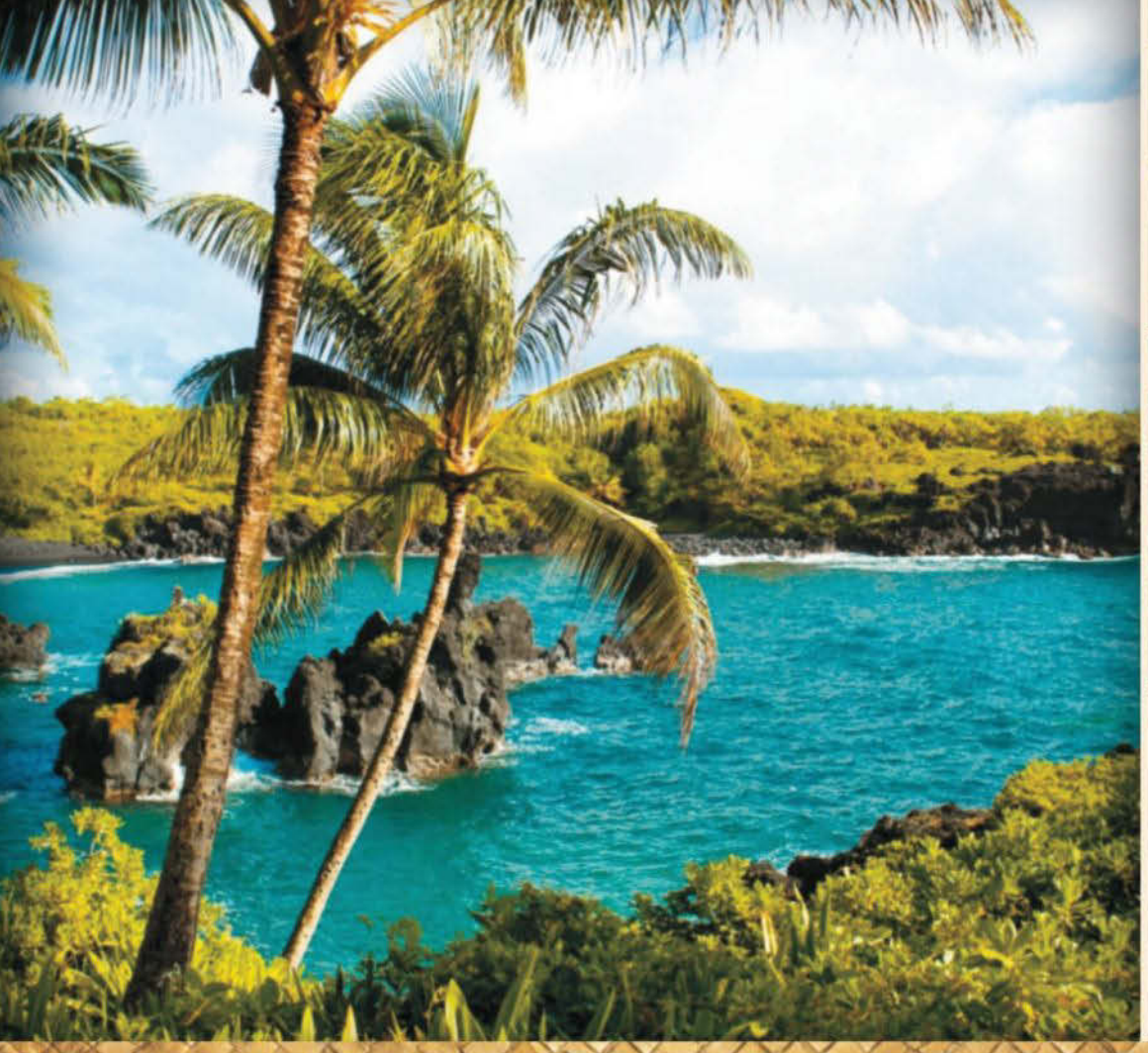
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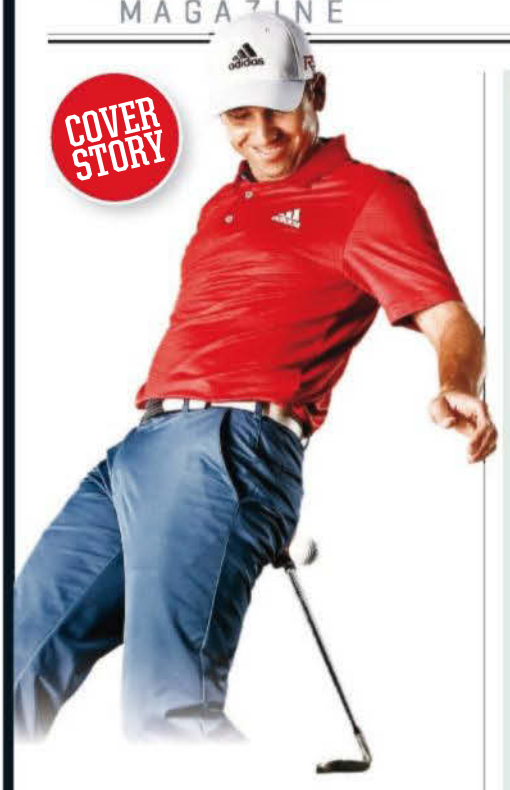
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GOLF MAGAZINE

April 2015 *Volume 57, Issue 4*



COVER STORY

Sergio's Secret

PURE YOUR IRONS with Sergio Garcia p.115

Sorry, Adam and Rory—brand-new research proves that Sergio Garcia is the best iron player on Tour. El Niño is a ballstriking savant, thanks to the way he moves his left shoulder from address through impact. Brian Manzella shares the secret behind Garcia's shoulder move to help you hit shots that never leave the pin.

THE MASTERS

A FRESH COAT p. 71
Hope springs eternal, and so does the quest for the green jacket.

THE PUTTS THAT WIN THE MASTERS p. 72
Ben Crenshaw reveals his secrets for holing the putts that determine the champion.

BILLY GOES BIG p. 82
He wins big. He loses big. Now Billy Horschel heads to Augusta, looking to claim the biggest event in golf.



BUBBA'S FINEST FIVE! p. 88
We count down Bubba Watson's most masterful Masters shots.

INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY p. 91
Well-traveled Brooks Koepka is this year's rookie to watch.

THE INFLUENCER p. 92
Augusta's renowned course design continues to impact layouts around the country.

TIGER ON THE EDGE p. 101
It's been a decade since Woods won a green jacket, but the reason might not be injury or scandal.



GOLF MAGAZINE INTERVIEW: CRAIG STADLER p. 104
As gruff and lovable as ever, "The Walrus" opens up about his greatest golf regret.

IF AUGUSTA NATIONAL RAN... p. 111
The year's first major is golf's most polished event, which makes you wonder: What if the National ran other noteworthy institutions?

PLUS: THE SULTAN OF SWING p. 124
In the 1920s, America's most famous golfer wasn't Bobby Jones. It was Babe Ruth.

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Watch the video edition of Tour Confidential on **Golf.com** every Monday, as host Jessica Marksbury and panelists from *Golf Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated* talk about golf's biggest names—Tiger, Phil, Rory, and more.



LIVE Q&A WITH BRADY RIGGS

Need a quick fix before your weekend round? Visit **Golf.com** to ask Top 100 Teacher Brady Riggs for a tip in his live Q&A on Tuesdays at noon EST, then watch new instruction videos from the best teachers in the game.



THE VAN CYNICAL COLUMN

Each Tuesday, *Sports Illustrated*'s Gary Van Sickle offers his contrarian take on the PGA Tour, such as why a swing like Tom Weiskopf's might work wonders for Tiger's game. Read it every week on **Golf.com.**



HEROES AND ZEROS

Every Monday on **Golf.com**, *Sports Illustrated*'s Alan Shipnuck recaps the best and worst of the week in golf, like why it's time for Jason Day (above) to go from talented tease to true superstar.

How to use the Scan-It/ See-It digital feature in this issue

Scan this photo *to watch a video of this lesson.*

HOW IT WORKS

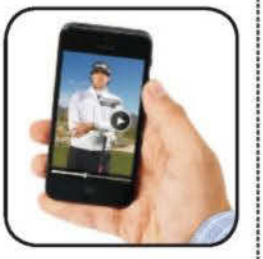
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TWITTER

Eamon Lynch
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The many calls for Tiger to go back to Butch are based on a flawed assumption that Butch would take him.

Alan Shipnuck
@alanshipnuck



Strolling at La Quinta CC, I've happened upon some breaking news: Pat Perez's hair has reached full-blown mullet status.

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Check out our bonus video featuring this month's cover star, Sergio Garcia.



Martin Kaymer in Slo-Mo

Control the two-time major winner's swing with a finger swipe, only on our tablet edition.



Artful Collaborations

Travelin' Joe selects his top co-designed courses that you can play, like Harbour Town (above).



Irons from Every Angle

Enjoy 360-degree spins of every new iron in this issue, plus ClubTester roundtable videos.



Learn from the Best

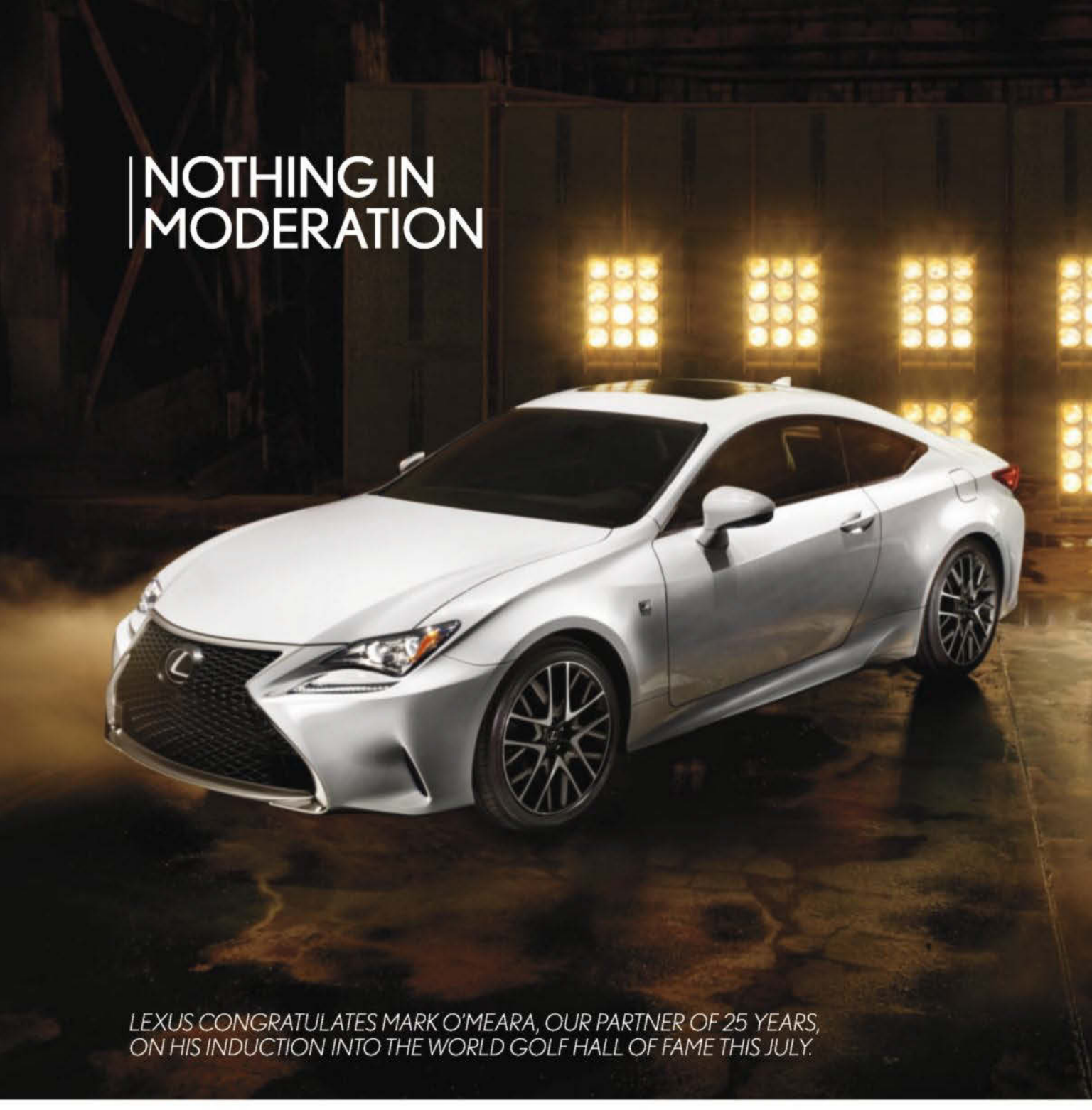
Watch Your Game video tips from Top 100 Teachers like Kellie Stenzel (above).



Go to Rules School

Our resident problem solver tackles your most confounding conundrums. Plus: a bonus quiz!

TOP ROW, L TO R: ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES; MARK NEWCOMBE/WWW.VISIONSINGOLF.COM; LARRY LAMBRECHT; BOTTOM ROW: SNAP 36; ANGUS MURRAY; ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN



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FROM THE EDITOR



David M. Clarke, Editor

Entering the Strike Zone

JUST A COUPLE MONTHS before Sergio Garcia played in his first Masters, in 1999, I visited him in his charming hometown of Borriol, on the east coast of Spain. He was only 19 at the time and brimming with pizzazz and potential. "Europe's Tiger," they were calling him.

A photographer and I were on assignment to profile Sergio for a British golf magazine. The youngster could not have been more gracious, posing for portraits in the mountains near his home and even at his desk at school, surrounded by grinning classmates. At Mediterraneo Golf Club, where Sergio's father, Victor, was the pro, Garcia was a model subject. On one hole, after he'd ripped a handful of drives down the fairway, I strolled out to the landing area and found all the balls clustered within several feet of one another. It was a remarkable display of the shotmaking prowess for which he would become famous. Ask the pros to identify the Tour's purest ballstriker, and you'll hear Sergio's name often.

What's his secret? It's in his left shoulder. On p. 115, Top 100 Teacher Brian Manzella peels back the layers of Garcia's swing and reveals the shoulder move that El Niño shares with other great ballstrikers. Manzella also explains how you can apply this move to your own swing and launch gorgeous, arcing shots.

SERGIO'S SHOULDER MOVE WILL HELP YOU LAUNCH GORGEOUS, ARCING SHOTS.

It may be time for a new set of irons to accompany your new move. You're in the right place. The second installment of our 2015 ClubTest (p. 135) raises the curtain on 30 new iron models, which our tireless team of testers reviewed during two weeks at World Golf Village Resort in St. Augustine, Fla. Longer. Higher. Straighter. Whatever your iron-game needs, you'll find the right set for you.

Billy Horschel has found his groove, even if the reigning FedEx Cup champ has yet to reach Rickie-like levels of fame. A revealing profile of Horschel (p. 82) anchors our 27-page Masters preview. Senior writer Cameron Morfit finds much to like about the ascendant 28-year-old, from his work ethic to his legendary largesse. (He "tipped" his caddie a cool million!) "He's wanted to be Mr. PGA Tour his whole life, and he loves it," says Horschel's Tour buddy Matt Every.

Here's another title Horschel would love: Mr. Masters Winner. With an attitude as towering as his talent, I'm not betting against him.



Ballstriker extraordinaire Sergio Garcia.

David M. Clarke, *Editor*

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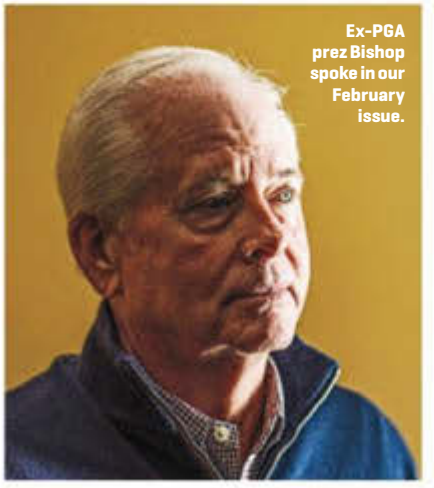
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LETTERS Our readers sound off

"TED BISHOP SHOULD ACCEPT HIS PUNISHMENT WITH GRACE. WE ALL MAKE STUPID STATEMENTS, BUT IT'S UGLY AND UNFAIR OUT THERE. HE SHOULD GET USED TO IT."
—CRAIG CUDDEBACK



Ex-PGA prez Bishop spoke in our February issue.

ANDREW HANCOCK

TED TALKS

It was highly entertaining to journey through Ted Bishop's path of rationalization in his *Golf Magazine* interview with Jeff Ritter ("I Got a Raw Deal," February 2015). I don't know which was more amusing: Bishop throwing Patrick Reed under the bus to try to minimize his own Ryder Cup–related offense, or Bishop trying to explain his offensive comments as a product of women and girls having "no opportunity to compete in athletics" 50 years ago. In a word: *what*?

Stuart Servetar, New York, N.Y.

I don't get the whole Greek tragedy aspect here with Ted Bishop. He got to meet the best players in the world, stay at fabulous resorts, and play astounding courses. I must be missing something.

Vinny Mooney, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

It's sad and telling that Bishop's own greatest regret in leaving the job isn't anything to do with furthering the game's future. Instead, he's most upset about losing his invites to tournaments. Can someone let him know that tickets to those events are on sale at the gate? He might even meet some real golfers like us out there in the real world.

Alun Probert, Sydney, Australia

I almost fell off my chair while reading Ted Bishop's explanation that the phrases "throwing like a girl" and "running like a girl" weren't meant to be derogatory. As someone who also grew up in Indiana in the 1960s, I can tell you that they certainly weren't meant to be complimentary.

Alan Ogden, Blaine, Wash.

I found it very sad and upsetting that Ted Bishop was fired for making the "lil girl" comment to Poulter. Aside from being ungentlemanly coming from someone of his stature in the golf community, I found nothing wrong with it. This focus on political correctness is on the verge of violating our constitutional right to free speech. The fact that he was fired for that comment just shows how emotionally fragile and unstable the PGA of America's feelings are.

Luis Pereira, Honolulu, Hawaii

The real problem with today's society is that too many leaders don't recognize the responsibility they have to set high standards and be accountable. One of the most important characteristics of good leadership is sensitivity and compassion for others. Do I think the level of political correctness in this country has reached ridiculous levels? Absolutely. However, I also think Bishop should accept his punishment for an impulsive and poor choice with grace. We all make stupid statements. Fortunately, mine have been among friends with their smartphones off. It's ugly and unfair out there. Bishop should get used to it and beware.

Craig Cuddeback, Atlanta, Ga.

HOLDING PATTERN

I really enjoyed Michael Bamberger's recent column about Tour caddie Kenny Harms and his relationship with wrestler Dave Schultz ("Going for Pins," February 2015). I am extremely impressed with his comparison of wrestling and golf. I was Dave Schultz's high school wrestling coach at Palo Alto High School in California, and knew him to be exactly the person that Kenny observed. Kenny was also completely correct in his analysis of John du Pont. Thank you for an article that brought back a lot of fond memories and great insight in comparing golf to wrestling.

Ed Hart, Ahwahnee, Calif.

GETTING TUNED UP

Regarding T.J. Tomasi's recent "Your Game" tip on how listening to music can improve your swing ("The Sounds of Science," February 2015): Years ago, I noticed that on the days when my tempo was spot-on, Van Halen's "Dance the Night Away" was playing in my subconscious. Now I try to prime myself with that track on the way to the course, but unfortunately, sometimes my body decides it's a "Surfin' USA" day. On those days, I've learned to leave the driver in the trunk, refuse all wagers, and steel myself for a day of toughing out bogeys.

Bob Stigger, Oak Park, Ill.

RISE AND GRIND

I really enjoyed Sean Zak's feature "The Quest for the Holy (Tour) Grail" (February 2015). It perfectly reflected the grind of the mini-tours that is a part of almost every young man's pursuit of the PGA Tour. Two of my boys currently compete on the various mini-tours across the country, and they've been paired at various times with all the players quoted in the article. No matter how things turn out for the boys in their professional golf careers, the ability to deal with setbacks (high scores and missed cuts) and rejection (from both sponsors and investors) is good practice for what life—and the future in general—has in store for us all.

Kevin Rappleye, Roseville, Calif.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Write to: *Golf Magazine*, 1271 Ave. of the Americas, 31st Fl., New York, N.Y. 10020, or e-mail us at **golfletters@golf.com**



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TEEING OFF



OH, BILLY!

Winning the Masters is always hard. Winning in the heyday of Jack, Arnie and Gary was downright herculean. Yet all eyes were on Billy Casper in 1970. Casper, who died in February at 83, finished the fourth round knotted at 9-under with Gene Littler, setting up an 18-hole Monday playoff, the last in Masters history. During the overtime session, Casper's putter shined, as it so often did in his 51-win Tour career. He one-putted six of the first seven greens, and nine in all, on his way to a 69 that bested Littler by five. (That's Casper, right, tidying up on No. 18.) When George Archer slipped a green jacket on the new champ (inset), the three-time major winner's smile was never brighter.

MAIN PHOTO AND INSET: AUGUSTA NATIONAL/ GETTY IMAGES




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TEEING OFF



GENTLY DOES IT

The last time a Masters was played without Ben Crenshaw, a stamp cost 8 cents and Richard Nixon was in the Oval Office. This year, Gentle Ben's 44th consecutive Masters start will be his last. From his 1972 Augusta debut through 1995, Crenshaw missed just two cuts and twice won the green jacket, in 1984 (main photo) and 1995 (inset, with caddie Carl Jackson), the latter just days after the death of his mentor, Harvey Penick. "I have to pull over and watch," Crenshaw said of his looming Masters retirement. "I'm resigned to being an encourager for everybody as much as I can." (Crenshaw's guide to mastering Augusta's greens begins on p. 72.)

MAIN PHOTO: AUGUSTA NATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES
INSET: ED REINKE/AP

TEEING OFF

IN FULL BLOOM

Rory McIlroy's ups and downs at the 2014 Masters—including this recovery shot from the azaleas behind the 13th green on Friday—seem like eons ago. (He would tie for eighth.) After winning the final two majors of 2014 and cementing himself as the world's best player, the 25-year-old will enter this year's tournament as the prohibitive favorite. A Masters win would put McIlroy in elite company. Only five players have won all four modern majors: Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Gene Sarazen and Tiger Woods.

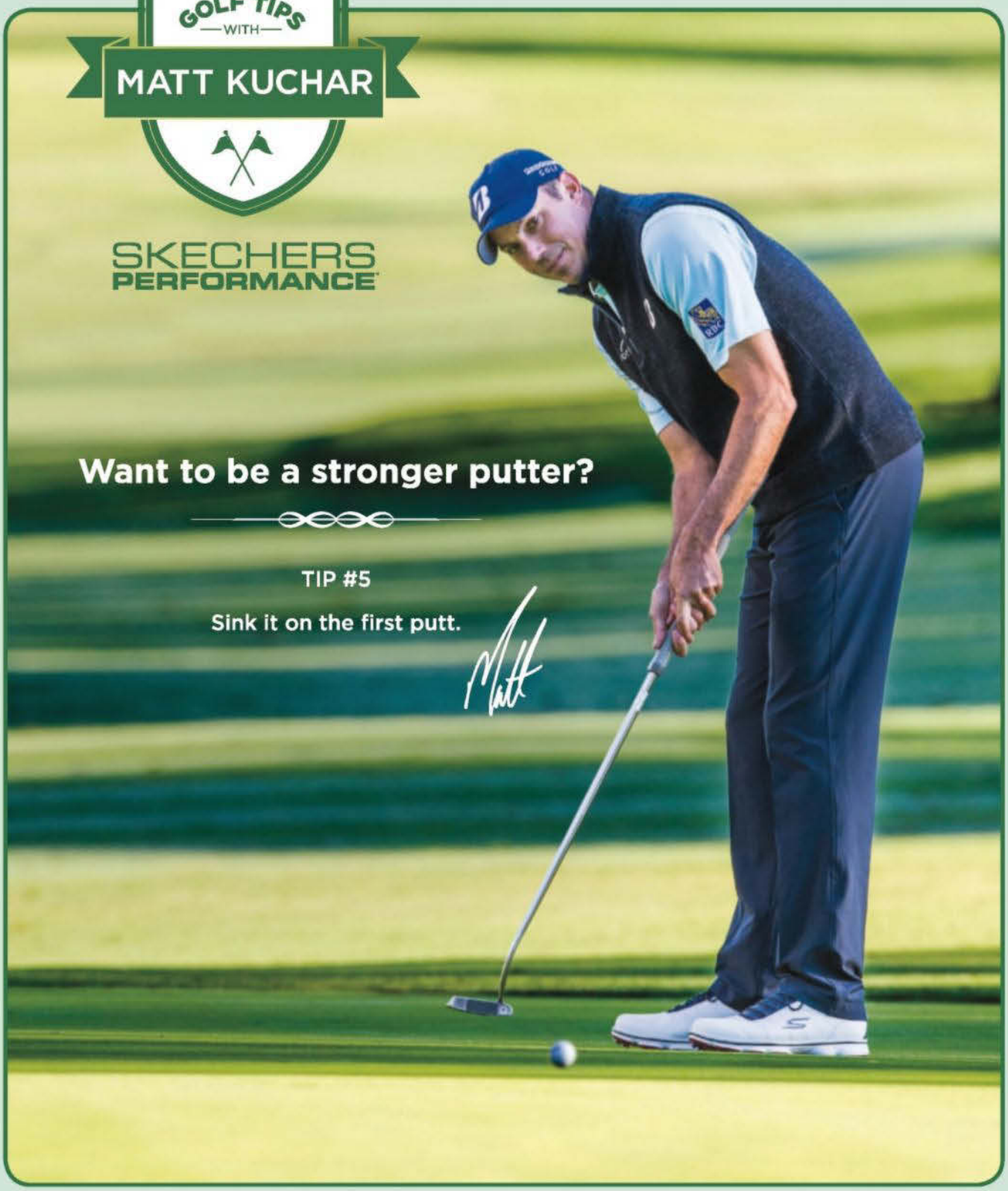
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INTERVIEW

HIS FIRST TIME

Interview by
Jessica Marksbury

Portrait by
Ryan Nicholson

On the heels of a breakthrough Tour win in October, **ROBERT STREB** is about to stroll down Magnolia Lane. His first Masters will also be his first major. So why isn't he nervous?

You won your first Tour event, the McGladrey Classic, in October. That earned you a two-year Tour exemption and a trip to Augusta, which will be your first major. How have you been preparing for the Masters, rookie?
[Laughs] I'm obviously pretty excited about it. I've been watching it on TV since I was a kid. Just going and getting some practice runs in gives you a feel for the place. Getting to see it will help me concentrate when I get there [for the tournament]. I can't wait.

Every young golf fan fantasizes about winning the green jacket. What about the Masters captured your imagination as a kid?
It's so many things. On TV, Augusta is just so green. Nothing's out of place—everything's perfect. The back nine usually fires up some pretty good excitement. There are barely any commercials. So, as a golfer and a fan, it's incredibly exciting. It was always the tournament to watch. It captures your attention like no other event.

ROBERT STREB

You turn 28 on Tuesday of Masters week. A green jacket would make a nice birthday present, but they say it takes experience to solve Augusta. What advice have fellow Tour players offered about handling the course?
Ben Martin told me to get some local knowledge from an Augusta caddie. Hudson Swafford gave me the same advice. Both of them played there in college. It's important to get all the knowledge you can.

What excites you most about competing there for the first time—besides the pimento-and-cheese sandwiches?
Just experiencing it in person. Like everyone says, it's so much hillier than it seems on TV, so I look forward to experiencing that.

You don't seem all that nervous. Does anything scare you about Augusta?
I'm a pretty laid-back, take-it-as-it-comes kind of guy. I'm a little nervous about how close those people sit to the green during the par-3 tournament. [*Laughs*] Other than that, no.

You played golf for four years at Kansas State before turning pro. Not many guys do that these days.
I needed to finish school. I wasn't a great player coming out of college, so I needed to get that piece of paper.

What part of your game was lacking back then?
I was an honorable mention All-American my last year at Kansas State, but I didn't win any tournaments. My ballstriking and short game have improved since, and my course management has obviously gotten better. Overall, it's been little tidbits here and there, and together it's all paid off.

Your play has been on an upward trajectory since you turned pro. What's the learning curve on Tour?
It's steep. It's hard work, which people don't understand. You work six, seven days a week. It's a job—a fun job, but a job. A big challenge is learning a new, hard course every week, then playing against guys who have played it 15 times. So yes, life on Tour is a learning curve. You have to figure out what works for you and how to get comfortable.

What's the best perk that comes with being a Tour winner?
Having a job for two more years is pretty cool. It's nice to have some security.

You live in Shawnee, Kansas, which is not exactly a travel hub for Tour players.
Between the FedEx Cup Playoffs and the start of the season, the weather's pretty good. I mean, there's a month of weather that's not great, but you get a few days here and there where you can go play. Wolf Creek, a club south of town—Tom Watson belongs there, and Gary Woodland plays there, too—is a great place to stay sharp.

Golf fans are still getting familiar with you. What would you like people to know about you?
Just that Tour players are pretty normal people. Don't be afraid to come up to us and say hi. We're not going to run you off. We're just regular people who happen to play golf for a living.

Back to the Masters: No one who's ever won the Par 3 Contest has gone on that week to win the green jacket. If you're in the hunt at the Par 3, will you five-putt on purpose?
[*Laughs*] No, I'm not the superstitious type. That doesn't bother me at all. I'll take any trophy I can get from the place! ■



Streb won the McGladrey Classic last October.

STEPHEN B. MORTON/AP

Robert Streb: Three Things I Know for Sure

Money doesn't buy happiness.
I know that's a cliché, but it's true. I wasn't making any money for a couple years as a pro out of college, and now I have money. While it's nice to have it, it doesn't always make you happy. It's important to enjoy whatever you've got that's valuable to you. There's more to life than money.

You have to keep your emotions in check.
On the course, I try not to let the highs get too high or the lows get too low. You have to do your best to deal with the valleys and the mountains. In other sports, your emotions can drive you and give you energy. But in golf, you don't want to ride your emotions too much. If you make a double-bogey, that doesn't mean your day is over. And if you make an eagle or birdie, it's not necessarily the greatest thing ever, either. It helps to stay at an even keel.

Golf is more than a job to me.
I like playing on Tour, but I also enjoy playing golf for fun. When I'm home, I'll go and play with my friends. I guess if, one day, I didn't like it anymore, maybe I'd quit, but I still enjoy coming home and playing with my friends. It's nice to not take it so seriously, and to have a good time without grinding, like I usually do.

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THE RULES

ASK THE RULES GUY

GOT A RULE YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND? ASK THE RULES GUY—HE WON'T THROW THE BOOK AT YOU!





CRAZY ANTS

Dear Rules Guy: My opponent's ball came to rest on a fire ant mound in a bunker. He claimed he could move his ball away from the mound without penalty to avoid a stinging attack. I said he could only claim relief like that outside a hazard. Who's right? *—Ron, The Hills, Texas*

A In the future, Ron, I hope the only stingers you encounter on the course are the low, wind-piercing kind. But if your opponent is truly concerned about the pests, Decision 1-4/10 lights the way with specific instructions on how to deal with "dangerous situations." Although the anthill is considered a loose impediment, it can't be moved in a hazard. But a player can drop within one club-length of the nearest danger-free spot, no nearer the hole, within the same hazard, and play penalty free. Problem solved—and you didn't have to use any Raid.

BAD VIBRATIONS

Rules Man: When my buddy's putt came to rest on the lip of the cup, he jumped in frustration, landed two feet from the hole, and the ball dropped in, on account of his heavy thud. I was certain he should have incurred a penalty, but he claimed that because the ball fell in within 10 seconds, his leap was legal. Was it? *—Jim Diederich, Berkeley, Calif.*

A Rule 16-2 gives you 10 seconds once you reach the hole to determine if the ball is at rest, but that's not the issue here. It sounds like your buddy's tantrum was caused by the fact that his ball was at *rest* on the lip of the cup (and not at the bottom of it), and that means that his stormy stomp did in fact cause the ball to move. That should have cost him a stroke per Rule 18-2a ("player causes the ball to move"), and the ball should have been replaced on the lip.

CROSSING THE LINE

Rules Guru: My tee shot stayed in bounds, but in order to hit it I had to stand outside the OB line. Should I have gone back to the tee? *—Len Kraus, via e-mail*

A There's no need to do the walk of shame and re-tee. When dealing with a shot that's almost OB, all that matters is the ball's position. As long as the ball is in play, you can place your feet wherever you want—on either side of the white stakes—to execute the shot.

GIMME SPACE

Rules Guy: The people I play with stand directly behind me while I putt. I find it distracting. Is there a rule against this? *—Michael G., Smiths Station, Ala.*

A Rule 14-2b does prohibit your caddie or partner from standing behind your ball on an extension of your line during your stroke, to the tune of two strokes, or loss of hole in match play. For an opponent in match play or fellow competitor in stroke play, there are no such restrictions. The Rules advise against standing directly behind the hole or ball being played, so as not to distract another player, but there's no penalty for this. If it bothers you, ask the culprits for space—or hold up a "No Loitering" sign.

Got a Rules question?

Of course you do! Whatever it may be, send yours to **rulesguy@golf.com** and the question may be answered in an upcoming issue of *Golf Magazine*. Until then, play by the Rules!

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Golf Magazine's technical & short-game consultant

DAVE PELZ

SHOULD YOU GO LEFT-HAND LOW?

Here's why changing up your conventional grip could dramatically improve your putting

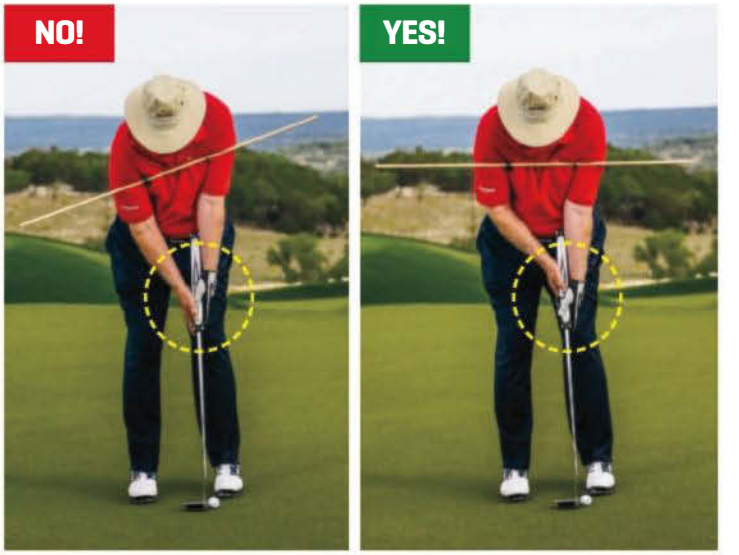
ALMOST EVERY GOLFER grips the putter with their right hand below their left. It's a natural arrangement, mostly because it's the way you grip your irons and woods. But for some of you, gripping your putter with your right hand low causes missed putts.

First, a right-hand-low grip positions your dominant hand in a dominant position on the handle, which can cause problems. In putting, the low hand is the power hand—it dictates the action when you putt. Worst-case scenario for some? Your too-dominant right hand flicks the putterhead through impact, shuts the putterface, or both—and you miss putts you should make.

Second, a right-hand-low hold at address tends to drop your right shoulder significantly below your left (left photo, above). When hitting your driver, tilted shoulders at setup are important, because they promote an upward strike, creating the optimal conditions of low launch and high spin. When putting, however, tilted shoulders make it difficult to follow-through, leading to a jabbing motion instead of a smooth stroke.

So if you miss a lot of putts that you think you should make, or you feel like you're "hitting" the ball instead of stroking it, buck the conventional and putt left-hand low. How? Just reverse the position of your hands on the handle. It's that simple! Placing your dominant hand in this new, passive position won't overpower your stroke. It will add balance and help even out your shoulders. It may also provide the touch and consistency you've been missing on the greens. When your shoulders are parallel to the green (above, right), your backstroke and through-stroke move more like a pendulum, freeing your right arm to extend your stroke down the line and decreasing the chances that you'll make a speed-killing jab at the ball.

This grip isn't new. Dozens of PGA Tour, LPGA and Champions Tour pros have used it over the years, but I don't see enough of it in the amateur ranks. It's time for a left-hand-low wake-up call. The benefits of putting this way won't materialize overnight, but be patient—if the change isn't right for you, you can always go back to your conventional grip. In my experience, however, many who "go low" never give it up. The improvement is real and lasting. The proof is more one-putts and increased confidence on the greens. ■



Gripping the putter with your right hand low creates too much shoulder tilt and restricts your follow-through.

Going left-hand low evens out your shoulders so you can make a smoother, more pendulum-like stroke.

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PETER KOSTIS

3 KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

Forget what you've heard before. Here are the three absolute musts to winning the Masters.

I've been lucky enough to cover the Masters on CBS for 25 years. Prevailing wisdom dictates that in order to win a green jacket, a player must do two things: Work the ball right to left, and putt well. But hey, didn't Jack Nicklaus win his six Masters by primarily hitting a fade? Now, don't get me wrong—in certain situations, it's an advantage to work the ball right to left, and I think that's one reason why Bubba Watson and Phil Mickelson have done so well in recent years. They're lefties, so the right-to-left shot is a controllable fade for them, and they can cut the corners on Nos. 10, 13 and 14, which creates a huge distance advantage on approach shots. That said, I believe there are three lesser-known—but extremely important—keys to success at Augusta.

KEY NO. 1: Distance Control

If you want to attack a hole location, you need to be able to exert complete control over your distance, and I mean within a yard or two. Sound extreme? It is! The green complexes at Augusta demand perfection. If your ball ends up on the wrong side of a ridge by even a few inches, it will funnel away into oblivion, and there goes your makeable birdie try. I cannot overstate the importance of distance control.

KEY NO. 2: Length off the Tee

Driver distance is crucial. The main reason Nicklaus dominated in his day is simple: He drove it farther than everyone else. The farther you drive it, of course, the shorter your iron shot will be into the green, making it easier to master Key No. 1. Also, Augusta rewards extra distance off the tee with flatter, less precarious lies. TV doesn't do justice to the severity of the sidehill and downhill lies. Take No. 9:



McIlroy has all three of Kostis's keys for success at Augusta.

A long hitter can drive his tee shot to the bottom of the hill. That means that not only is he *not* faced with an uphill shot from a downhill lie, he also has a shorter club in his hand that he can hit higher, which gives him a better chance to land his shot softly on the green. The same goes for No. 10. There are lots of situations where big drives let you escape the most difficult uneven fairway lies that shorter hitters face. At Augusta, short is not sweet off the tee.

KEY NO. 3: Strong Legs

Strong legs are critically important in the swing. Uneven lies make it difficult for many players to maintain balance and the quality of the strike, and strong legs help a lot with balance. Nicklaus had big, strong tree stumps for legs, and that helped him. Arnold Palmer's legs were plenty strong, too, and he also used his massive upper-body strength to help muscle the ball off hanging lies. Players who have difficulty keeping their legs "underneath them" in the swing will have more problems with the uneven lies.

So, based on these keys, who's my Masters favorite? It shouldn't be a big surprise: Rory McIlroy. His driving is magnificent (he's long and fairly straight), he's got powerful legs, and he's matured enough to handle the pressure of winning the one major that's eluded him.

I'll add another thing: The only way a shorter hitter is going to win the Masters is if inclement weather makes the par 5s three-shot holes rather than eagle chances. If this happens—as it did in 2008, when Zach Johnson won his green jacket—shorter hitters who excel at hitting wedges might have a chance on this long, tough course.

While the short game will always be important for salvaging pars and keeping momentum going, you won't chip and putt your way to victory at Augusta. This is a second-shot course. To score well, you have to hit it the right distance to the right section of the green, and with their shorter approach shots, the big bombers will have a big advantage. ■

KOSTIS TIP: DIAL IN YOUR DISTANCES

When recreational players go to the range, they tend to spend a lot of time practicing directional control. But *distance* control is every bit as important. Tour players can control their approaches to within a few yards of their targets. For most everyday players, the margin of error can be 10 yards or more! My advice: When you practice, focus on a target line, but chart your iron distances to see how far they really travel. That way, you'll improve your distance control as well as the directional quality of your approach shots.

Got a swing question for Peter Kostis? Tweet him at *@peterjkostis*.

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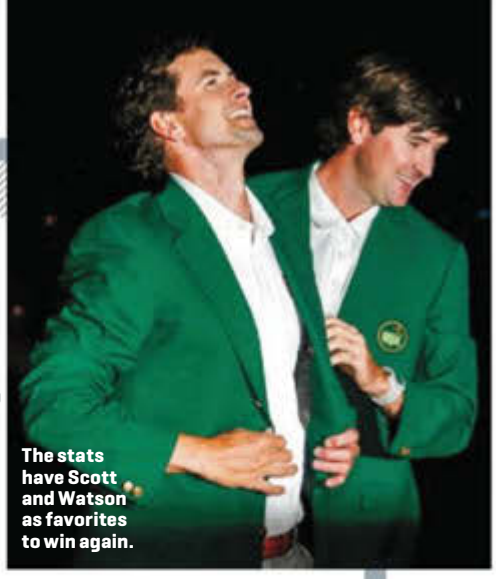
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MARK BROADIE: EVERY SHOT COUNTS



AND THE GREEN JACKET GOES TO...

Who says you can't predict the Masters champion? Here's the real reason why Rory, Adam and Bubba are among the favorites to win this year.



The stats have Scott and Watson as favorites to win again.

With the season's first major upon us, I thought it would be interesting to develop a statistical model to predict the Masters winner. And why not? Netflix predicts movies you might like based on your viewing habits, and online music-streaming station Pandora suggests songs to match your listening habits. Sounds straightforward, right? Unfortunately, ShotLink isn't used at the Masters, so I can't look at Augusta-specific Strokes Gained data to assess how a player will perform there. That means I'm limited to using stats from the PGA Tour season and from past Masters finishes.

Predicting major winners is fun, but it poses challenges. Due to *Golf Magazine*'s press schedule, I wrote this column without access to much 2015 Tour data. So the two main factors I'll use in my analysis are: 1) how players performed in the 2014 season (represented by their total Strokes Gained), and 2) how players performed in up to four of the most recent Masters. The tricky part? Figuring out the proper weight to give each of the two factors. I crunched the numbers for the past 10 Masters and determined that it's a sound strategy to put a 60 percent weight on 2014 Tour performance and a 40 percent weight on performance in previous Masters. (Yes, history tells us that course knowledge and experience matter a lot at Augusta, but there are exceptions to the rule—take Jordan Spieth and Jonas Blixt, first-timers who tied for second last year.) I applied my formula and produced the 10 golfers most likely to win the 2015 Masters (sidebar).

With seven green jackets between them, you may wonder: Where are Tiger and Phil? Woods didn't crack the top 10 because of his poor performance in the 2014 season. Mickelson is just outside the top 10 (No. 12), mainly because his 2014 season wasn't one of his best. Scott, McIlroy and Bubba are no surprises at the top, but…Charl Schwartzel at No. 9? The South African sneaks into the top 10 on the strength of his 2011 Masters win.

Now for a few disclaimers: My two-pronged method does exclude several factors, such as which player is hot heading to Georgia and who's dealing with an injury. I also didn't look very carefully at Masters rookies like Brooks Koepka, who won his first PGA Tour event at the Waste Management Open, nor players who play primarily on the European Tour, like Henrik Stenson. Still, when I went back in time and applied this method to predict past Masters champions, the winner made my top 10 half the time. Not bad, considering that more sophisticated methods would have had a hard time predicting the victories of Mike Weir, Trevor Immelman or Angel Cabrera.

So now that we have our contenders, let's determine which holes will be most important at Augusta. The player who gains the most strokes against the field grabs the green jacket, so it makes sense to identify the holes where the tournament's top five finishers gained the most on the field each year.

At Augusta, the holes topping that list (in order of most gain) are Nos. 7, 18, 13, 12, and 14. Let's focus on the first three. Statistics show that the field plays the par-4 seventh over par, with an average score of 4.2, but the top five finishers play it slightly under par, with an average score of 3.9. Thus, the top finishers gain 0.3 strokes per round on the field, or just over one stroke in the tournament, on average. Since the top finishers average 0.4 strokes under par for four days on No. 7, savvy players could set a target of even par or 1-under-par for the tournament on this hole.

The top finishers gain almost as much on the field on No. 18 (field average of 4.2 vs. the top-five average of 3.9) and No. 13 (4.7 vs. 4.4). Players could target even par or 1-under for four days at No. 18 and 2- or 3-under for four days at No. 13. Colin Swatton, Jason Day's coach and caddie, likes using the performance of past winners to set target scores for Day on each hole of each tournament. It's no surprise that most of the key holes at Augusta come on the back nine, but now we know how important they are. With this knowledge, Sunday afternoon at this year's Masters should be more exciting than ever. ■

PLAYERS MOST LIKELY TO WIN THE MASTERS

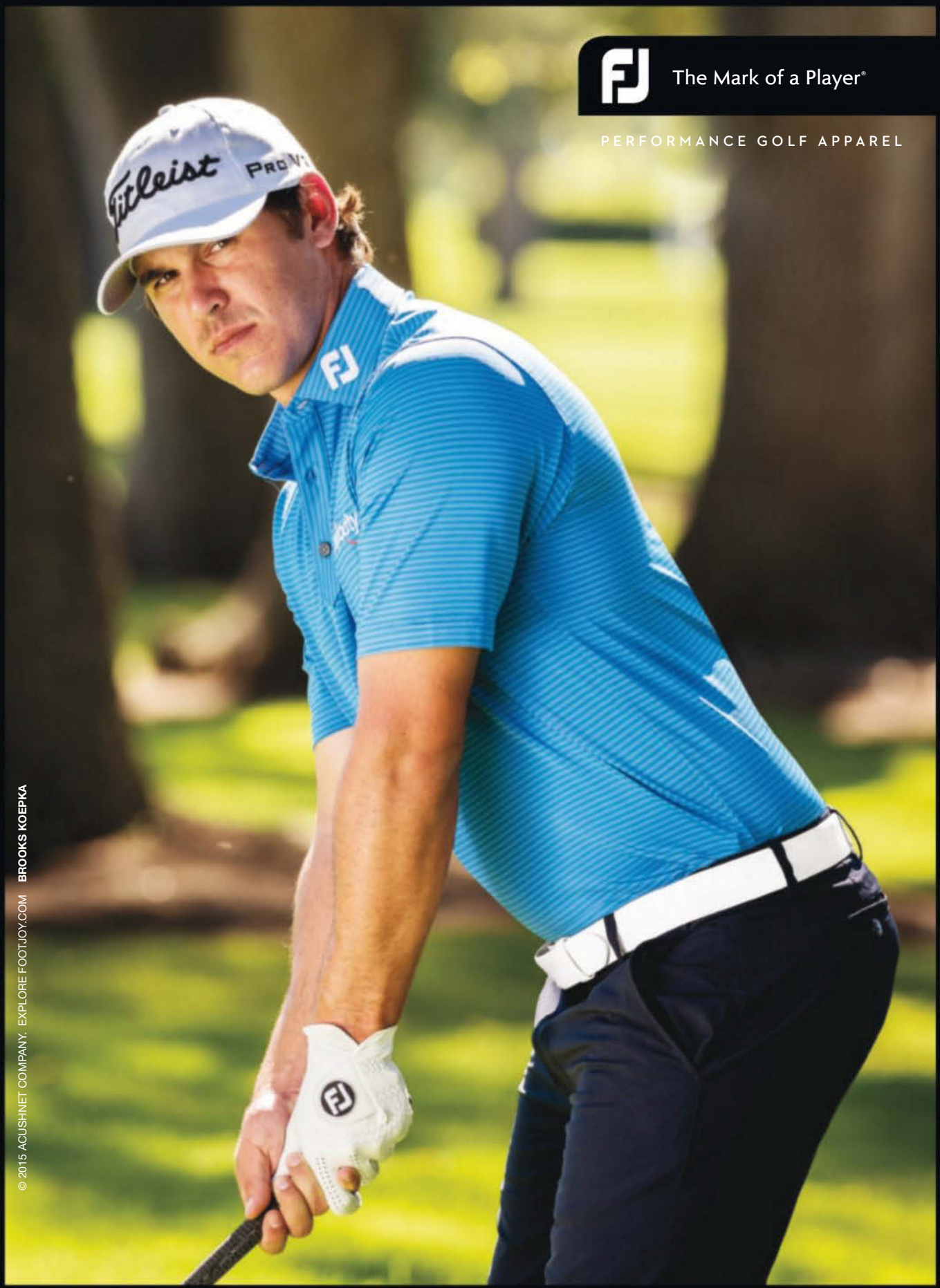
(Based on Strokes Gained and previous Masters performances)

1	Adam Scott
2	Rory McIlroy
3	Bubba Watson
4	Matt Kuchar
5	Sergio Garcia
6	Jim Furyk
7	Jason Day
8	Justin Rose
9	Charl Schwartzel
10	Jordan Spieth

ASK MARK!

Got a stats question for Mark Broadie, best-selling author of *Every Shot Counts*? Ask him via Twitter: @MarkBroadie

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NEW BALLS

MISSION: CONTROL

Titleist's new Pro V1 and Pro V1x feel softer and spin more on scoring shots

By Michael Chwasky

Titleist's Pro V1 franchise has dominated the ball landscape—on Tour and at retail—since it was first introduced in the early 2000s. That's due in large part to the Pro V1's and Pro V1x's combination of big distance, consistent flight and outstanding short-game control. For 2015, the company is releasing upgrades that promise even more of what's kept these bestsellers on top of the ball game.

The secret sauce consists of extensive R&D, a ton of testing with both Tour professionals and everyday players, technological advancements and Titleist's exacting manufacturing process (the Pro V1 has 90 quality-control checks, while the Pro V1x gets 120). This time around, that all adds up to a new urethane elastomer cover that provides a softer feel than the 2013 models, with even more spin on half- and full-wedge shots. Both balls also retain the paint system that debuted in 2013, so consumers can count on the same durability and consistency they've come to expect through the years from the most popular balls in golf.

Still, the guts of both models remain the same as those from previous generations. The three-piece Pro V1 has a softer feel than its compatriot, produces more spin on long shots and has a more penetrating trajectory. The four-piece Pro V1x feels firmer, spins less on long shots and launches higher with a steeper descent angle for relatively more carry distance.

We often hear from weekend warriors who say they're not good enough to use these (or any other) premium-priced Tour balls. That's simply not the case. The Pro V1 family ($48/dozen) can be played—and enjoyed—by golfers of all skill levels. You can expect relatively low spin off the big clubs, for long distance, and maximum spin on short shots, which allows for excellent control when you really need to stick a pressure shot close to the hole. So go try the Pro V1s and see for yourself.



A softer urethane cover contributes to more spin on scoring shots.

JAMES WESTMAN (4)



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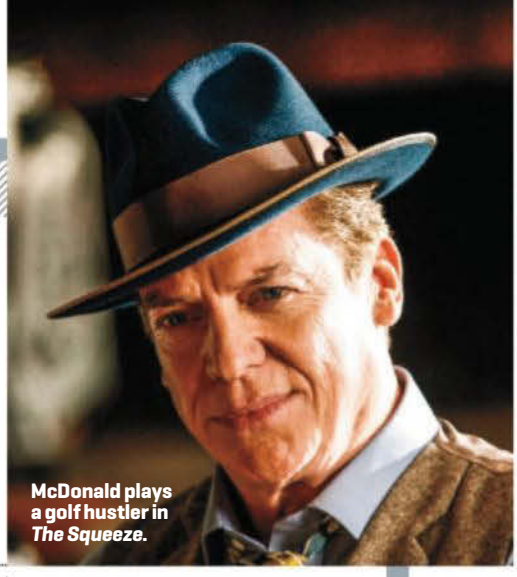
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INTERVIEW

AMERICAN SHOOTER

The man who brought Shooter McGavin to life is back in a new golf movie, *The Squeeze*. **Christopher McDonald** talks *Happy Gilmore*, gambling and how Greg Norman helped create a film icon.

INTERVIEW BY **Jessica Marksbury**



McDonald plays a golf hustler in *The Squeeze*.

It's been almost 20 years since you played Shooter McGavin, Adam Sandler's foil in *Happy Gilmore*. What made you want to do another golf movie?
It's a great role as a golf hustler—a true story of a kid who was a golf phenom in the middle of Texas. Driving through the country one day, here comes this gambler, my character, Riverboat, based on a famous gambler from the 1920s and '30s, Titanic Thompson. I'm trying to make my way to Las Vegas, and I stumble on this kid, this golf force of nature. I pull the kid into this gambling underworld with promises of big money. And for a kid with nothing, it's a deal he can't refuse.

Why should golf fans see *The Squeeze*?
Golf and gambling have been going on for a long time. Even the great Tour pros of the past dabbled in gambling on the course. And what's really intriguing about this story is that it's true. We also had a tremendous director in Terry Jastrow, whose background is in running ABC golf broadcasts for many years, so fans will appreciate the authenticity of the golf.

You play golf. If you had a sleeve for every time someone called you Shooter on the course, how many balls would you have?
I would need an airplane hangar to store them all! That character has been with me every day since the movie came out and became a sleeper hit. The lines are so classic, and I get them thrown at me all the time, on and off the course.

Which line do you hear most?
I hear, "You eat pieces of s--- for breakfast?" all the time.

Any good golf-gambling stories from your own life?
I was playing in a tournament in Buffalo and [Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback] Ben Roethlisberger was there. We're on the final hole, about 300 people are watching us. We're playing a scramble, and we have a 35-footer to make. I have the privilege of watching the other guys putt first. Then it's my turn. Big Ben starts heckling me, yelling, "Shooter! You suck! Shooter! If you make this, I'll give you $100 right now!" That just made me think, "Boy, I'd really love to make this." I hit a perfect putt, and it actually went in! The crowd went crazy, and we won the tournament. It was like a movie. Ben throws the cash on the ground, and I say, "No, Ben—pick it up and put it in my hand." [*Laughs*] He wasn't happy, but he did pay up, bless him.

Which Tour player, past or present, seems most like Shooter to you?
When we were making *Happy Gilmore*, I always had Greg Norman in mind. He was always so well-dressed and such a great player. He was the best player of his era, of course, and he always seemed full of himself. He just *knew* he was the best. I wanted to look like him, so I got as many of his clothes into the movie as I could. Norman is a hero, and without him, Shooter wouldn't be Shooter.

The Squeeze *will be available on premium VOD and in select U.S. markets on April 17.*

PGA TOUR: THE MOVIE!

Long-ago greats like Jones and Hagen have come to life on the silver screen. Here's a foursome of today's top players, and the perfect actors to portray them.



Dustin Johnson



Bradley Cooper



Phil Mickelson



Emilio Estevez



Rickie Fowler



Zac Efron



Natalie Gulbis



Tara Reid

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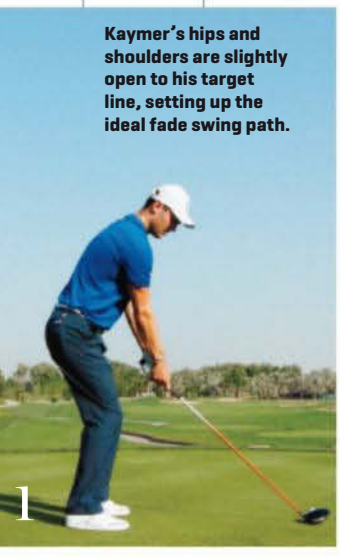
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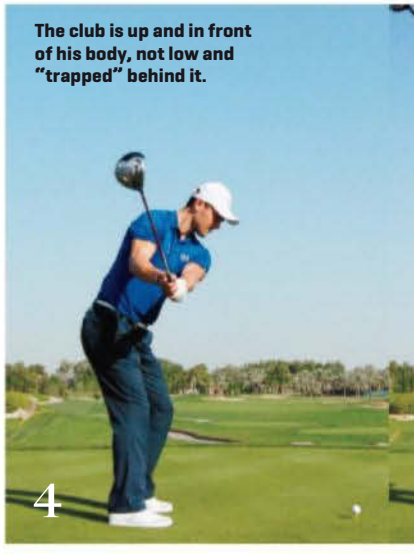
WATCH & LEARN

For two-time major champion Martin Kaymer, the power fade remains his hallmark shot shape. Here's how to make it part of your game.



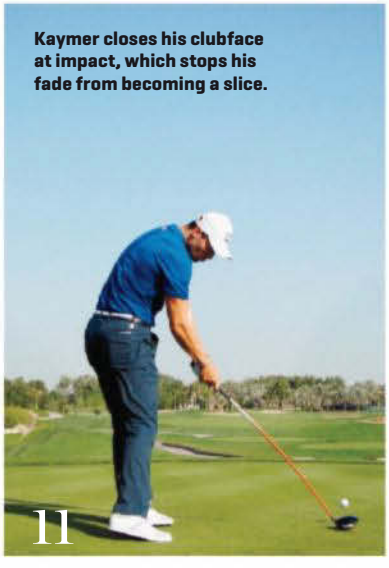


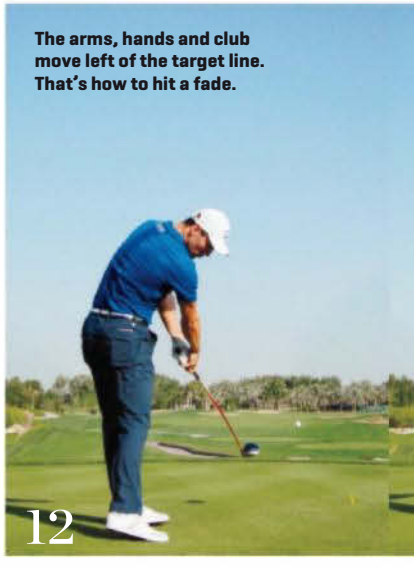












GOLF.COM

Watch dozens of PGA Tour stars hit the shots you need at **golf.com/sequences**

Analysis by Top 100 Teacher **BRADY RIGGS**, *Woodley Lakes G.C., Van Nuys, Calif.*



As a youth, Martin Kaymer, now 30, idolized Ernie Els. The Big Easy won early and often in his 20s, and Kaymer followed his hero's lead, bagging eight titles (including the 2010 PGA Championship) before turning 26. Then came a swing change, and a three-year winless streak. A natural fader, Kaymer learned how to hit a draw, the preferred shot shape at Augusta National. He can now move the ball in both directions, a versatility that helped him win last year's U.S. Open. Still, the power fade remains his go-to tee shot.

STATISTICS

Stats from the 2014 PGA Tour

THE LINE ON KAYMER

117 mph
Clubhead Speed

294.9 yds.
Driving Distance

38th
Total Driving Rank

















Above, Kaymer reveals how to master this move. At address, his shoulders and hips are slightly open to the target line—a must for working the ball left to right. Also notice how he keeps the clubhead outside his hands in his backswing, which ensures that the clubhead will approach the ball from an out-to-in angle. And yes, he closes the clubface though impact. This may sound counterintuitive to producing a cut, but it's the right move—if you leave the clubface open through impact, you'll be hitting your next shot from the right rough. Learn from German engineering: Curve it with your swing path, not your clubface.

Sequence photography by MARK NEWCOMBE/VISIONS IN GOLF
Portrait by AL TIELEMANS/SI

TABLET BONUS

Control Martin Kaymer's swing with the swipe of a finger on the iPad and tablet editions of *Golf Magazine*. Visit golf.com/allaccess.



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Edited by
David DeNunzio & Michael Chwasky

GET UP AND DOWN



TOM STICKNEY
Bighorn G.C., Palm Desert, Calif., and Promontory G.C., Park City, Utah
(Top 100 since 2007)

Hit Crisp, Pin-Seeking Chips

At the end of your rope? This easy drill helps you make square contact every single time.

Scan this photo *to watch a video of this lesson.* *See p. 10.*

Does poor chipping have you up against the ropes? Well, now you can use that rope to hit crisp short shots with pinpoint accuracy. Find a three-foot section of rope at the range and point it straight at your target as I've done here. Your goal? Hit chips straight down the line. To do this, you must keep the clubface square through impact. If you hit the ball right of the rope, you probably gripped the club too tightly through contact. Left of the rope? You over-rotated your hands. Let the rope be your guide. The visual of a straight line is a powerful training aid that can help increase both clubface awareness and the accuracy of your chips.



At the range, use a few feet of rope as a target line for chips. If your shots start straight, your clubface is square at impact.

ANGUS MURRAY (2)

WATCH THIS ON YOUR IPAD OR TABLET. VISIT **GOLF.COM/ALLACCESS.**

GOLF TOP 100 TEACHERS IN AMERICA
MARK BLACKBURN
Greystone Golf & C.C., Birmingham, Ala.
(Top 100 since 2013)



Knock Every Shot Laser-Straight

Losing your slice—for good—is easier than you think. Simply square the shaft, not the face.

Fact: You won't drive the ball far—or straight—unless you strike it with a square clubface. Great drivers do this on almost every swing, but probably not the way you think they do. Instead of rotating the clubface to square by turning their hands, they turn their body. The key to this move is aligning your left arm and the shaft before you rotate the club. Here's how to groove the right feel:

1 Choke down on your driver and swing. Stop when your left arm is parallel to the ground in the downswing.

2 "Square" the shaft by letting out the hinge in your wrist without rotating your hands. Release the hinge until the shaft is nearly in line with your left arm. The clubface will look open—that's okay. You'll square it in the next step.

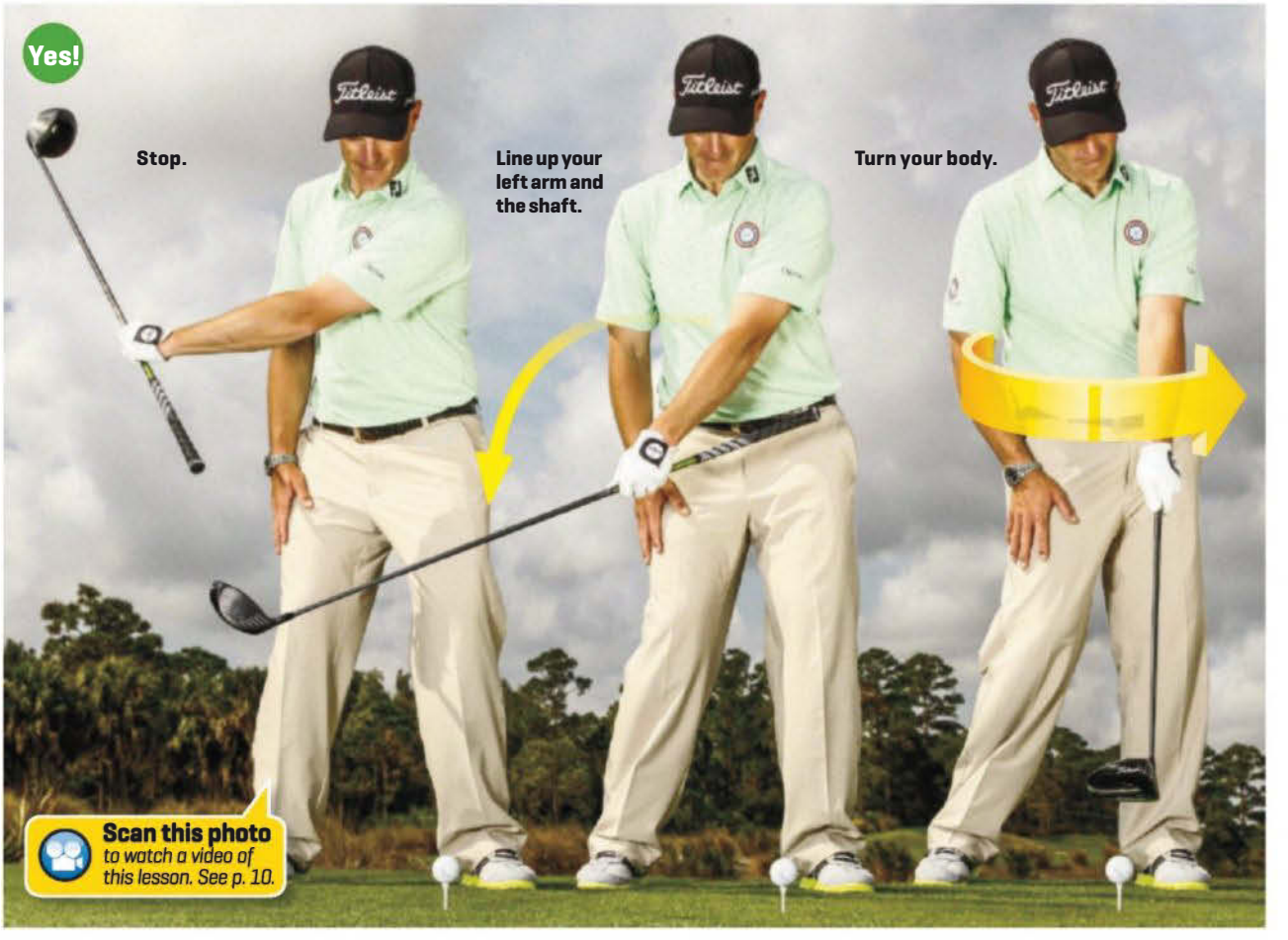
3 Rotate your lower body. *Voilà!* The face is square and the shaft is in perfect position for a powerful, ascending strike.

Yes, it's that simple: Square the shaft before you square the face. If you square the face first by rotating your hands early in your downswing, it will probably move to a closed position by impact, leading to powerless, off-center hits.



Rotating the face here...

...means the face will be closed here.



ANGUS MURRAY (6)

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THE SAFEWAY FOUNDATION

The *Hunger Is* campaign is a collaboration between The Safeway Foundation and the Entertainment Industry Foundation to raise awareness and improve the health of hungry children.

EIF ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY FOUNDATION

The Safeway Foundation and the Entertainment Industry Foundation are 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations. Photo by: Nigel Parry

KELLIE STENZEL
Boca Raton Resort & Club, Boca Raton, Fla.
(Top 100 since 2009)

"Kick" Your Knee for Extra Power

This balance drill improves stability at impact for rocket-like irons

Balance is critical for solid iron strikes. All great players—heck, even the "pretty good" ones—have excellent balance. While some are born with good balance, it's a skill that can be learned, and this drill will show you how. Within only a few swings, you'll sense more overall stability *and* more power at impact.

Tee a ball about a half-inch from the ground, then take your setup with a mid-iron and your feet only a few inches apart. Swing the club back as far as your flexibility allows. You'll feel a bit restricted since your feet are so close together, but try to make this as close to your regular swing as possible. If you feel yourself falling off balance as you swing to the top, return to your address position and start again.

When you can swing to the top fluidly and in balance, continue your motion and hit the balll, shifting and turning like you do with your feet in their normal position. Try kicking in your right knee toward the target as you move through impact (middle photo, below). This makes it easier to get your weight over your left foot so you don't fall back and lose your balance.

As you swing into the finish, let your right heel come off the ground (right photo). This alleviates tension in your body, freeing you up to make a nice, full finish with nearly all of your weight resting on your left foot. Perfect.

Make this drill a regular part of your practice routine. It works so well for my students that some of them use it as their practice swing on the course. Golf is filled with shortcuts—so-called fixes that only work for a round or two. This isn't one of them. Even a slight increase in stability can save you strokes for good.



ANGUS MURRAY (4)

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Fusion ATL
Atlanta, Ga.
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Hit Your Putts with Perfect Speed

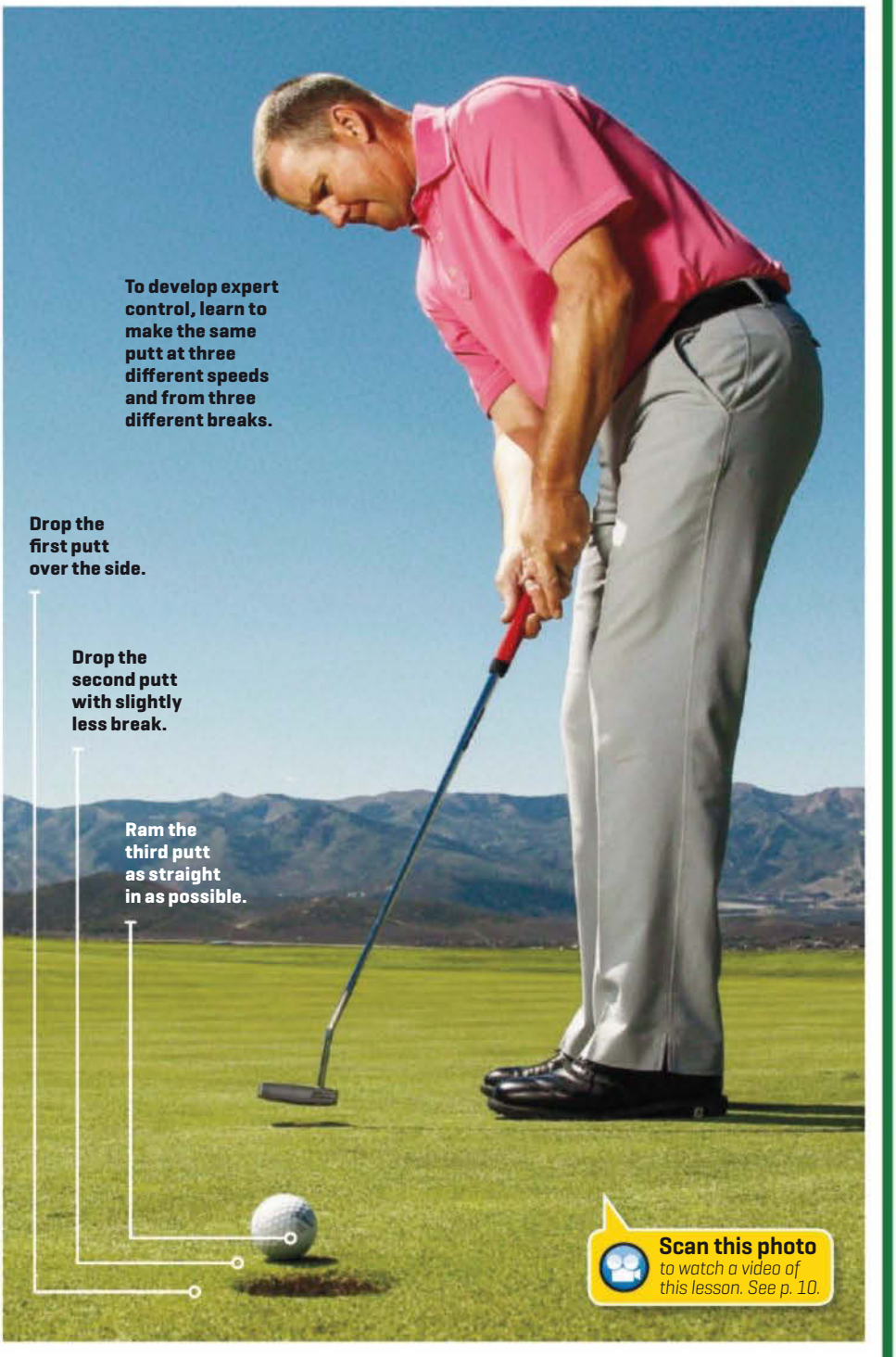
My easy drill gives you Tour-like touch, especially on big benders

Good putters don't have perfect strokes. They do, however, have perfect speed. Instinctively, they know how to roll downhillers softly enough so that the ball just *drips* over the front edge. And they always hit uphillers with enough pace to get to the hole. They also manage breaking putts as easily as they do straight ones. These skills are easy to appreciate but hard to duplicate—until now. Here's a drill to help you fine-tune your sense of speed, so that every putt either drops or leaves you with a tap-in.

THE THREE-SPEED DRILL

Take three balls to the practice putting green and find a five-footer that breaks about one cup. The goal is to hole this bender at three different speeds. On the first putt, try to make the ball drop over the side of the cup; allow plenty of break, so that the ball trickles in from the high side. Hit the second putt a bit firmer and play less break, so that it falls in somewhere between the entry point of your first ball and the front of the hole. With the last ball, hit the putt hard enough to eliminate most of the break and rattle the back of the jar.

You probably won't make all three on your first go-round. Don't sweat it. What's important is that you're training your body and mind to adjust your stroke to how fast—or slow—you want to roll the ball. Now *that's* control. Do this drill enough and you'll soon learn that proper speed is more important than the perfect line. You'll also build more and more confidence on the greens and gain a reputation as the guy who putts great on any course, no matter how fast the greens are.

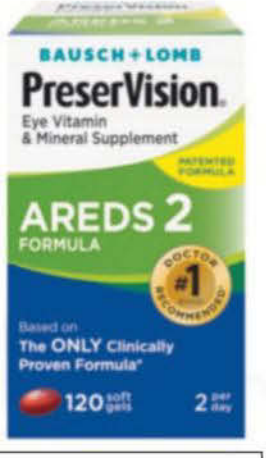


ANGUS MURRAY (2)

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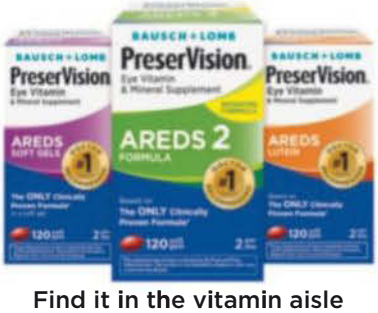
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FRED GRIFFIN
Grand Cypress Academy of Golf, Orlando, Fla.
(Top 100 since 1996)

Make a Wider Arc for Monster Drives

Here's how to harness "body power" for tee shots that fly far and straight

You swing your driver as hard as you can, but the ball just doesn't fly very far. Sound familiar? You're probably making an armsy, wedge-type swing with your driver. Many weekend warriors set up with their feet too close together and the ball positioned too far back in their stance—*not* the way to wield the big dog. Failing to establish a wide base and a sufficiently forward ball position forces you to swing your driver back using mostly your arms, creating a narrow backswing arc. And a narrow arc leads to a weak hit. To widen your arc, widen your stance. Start with your feet together and the ball teed up opposite the instep of your left foot. Next, take a big step to the right with your right foot, leaving your left foot in place (so you won't alter the ball position). The step should be big enough to make the distance between your feet slightly wider than your shoulders. You're now in the perfect driver-address position!

Now simply maintain the width you established at address into your backswing. As you turn away from the ball, swing your hands as far away from your body as possible (main photo, below). You've got it down if you feel tension in your back and your left lat. Also, delay your wrist hinge—the longer the better—until your hands are well past your right leg.

"Wide" arms and a delayed wrist hinge not only create a nice, wide arc, they also involve your entire body in your backswing and downswing. You're now swinging with "body power"—not just arm power—and you'll launch the ball miles down the fairway.



ANGUS MURRAY (3)

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with
DR. T.J. TOMASI
Keiser University
Port St. Lucie, Fla.
(Top 100 since 1999)



Slice-Proof Your Setup—in Seconds

Beware the flare! A square left foot is the secret to splitting fairways, new research says.

You slice, and nothing seems to help. Here's a fix I'll bet you've never tried: Square—don't flare—your left foot at address. My research colleague at Keiser University, Eric Wilson, Ph.D., and I did an experiment, and we found the move to be a bona fide banana-ball buster. We came to this conclusion after comparing 320 6-iron swings made by 16 golfers just like you. Each tester hit 10 shots with their normal left foot position (25.3 degrees open, on average), and 10 more shots with their left foot set perpendicular, or square, to the target line. We noticed a significant difference in clubface angle at impact. How significant? Let's just say, "Beware the flare."

	FOOT FLARE AT ADDRESS	CLUBFACE ANGLE AT IMPACT
BEFORE	25.3° open	1.03° open
AFTER	0°	.06° closed

Going from a clubface that's 1.03 degrees open at impact to .06 degrees closed may not seem like much, but that 1.09 degrees, according to several published reports, is the difference between hitting your target right on the money and missing it by at least four yards to the right with a 6-iron or 11 yards to the right with a driver. The change was even more significant for golfers with handicaps between 9 and 16. This group went from 1.22 degrees open at impact to 3.56 degrees closed. Good-bye, slice—hello, power draw!

How does it work? Our research shows that the squarer your left foot at address, the easier it is to straighten your left leg as you swing though impact. Straightening is key—it creates a wall for the clubhead to smash through at breakneck speed while accelerating the rotational (i.e., closing) momentum of the clubhead. You can create this wall with a flared left foot, but it'll take shape a little too late. (This is why Tour pros set up open to the target to hit a fade—it pre-sets their swings to open the face at impact.)

But don't take our word for it—prove it to yourself. Hit shots using both foot positions, and note your ball flight with each. We're confident you'll find that a square stance fuels square strikes. In other words, "Face closed!"



Deflare your front foot (that is, square it to the target line at address) to square the clubface. See ya later, slice!

NUMBERS DON'T LIE

11

Potential miss (in yards) to the right when you flare your left foot rather than squaring it.

ANGUS MURRAY (2)

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(Top 100 since 2009)

"Drive" Long Bunker Shots to Tap-in Range

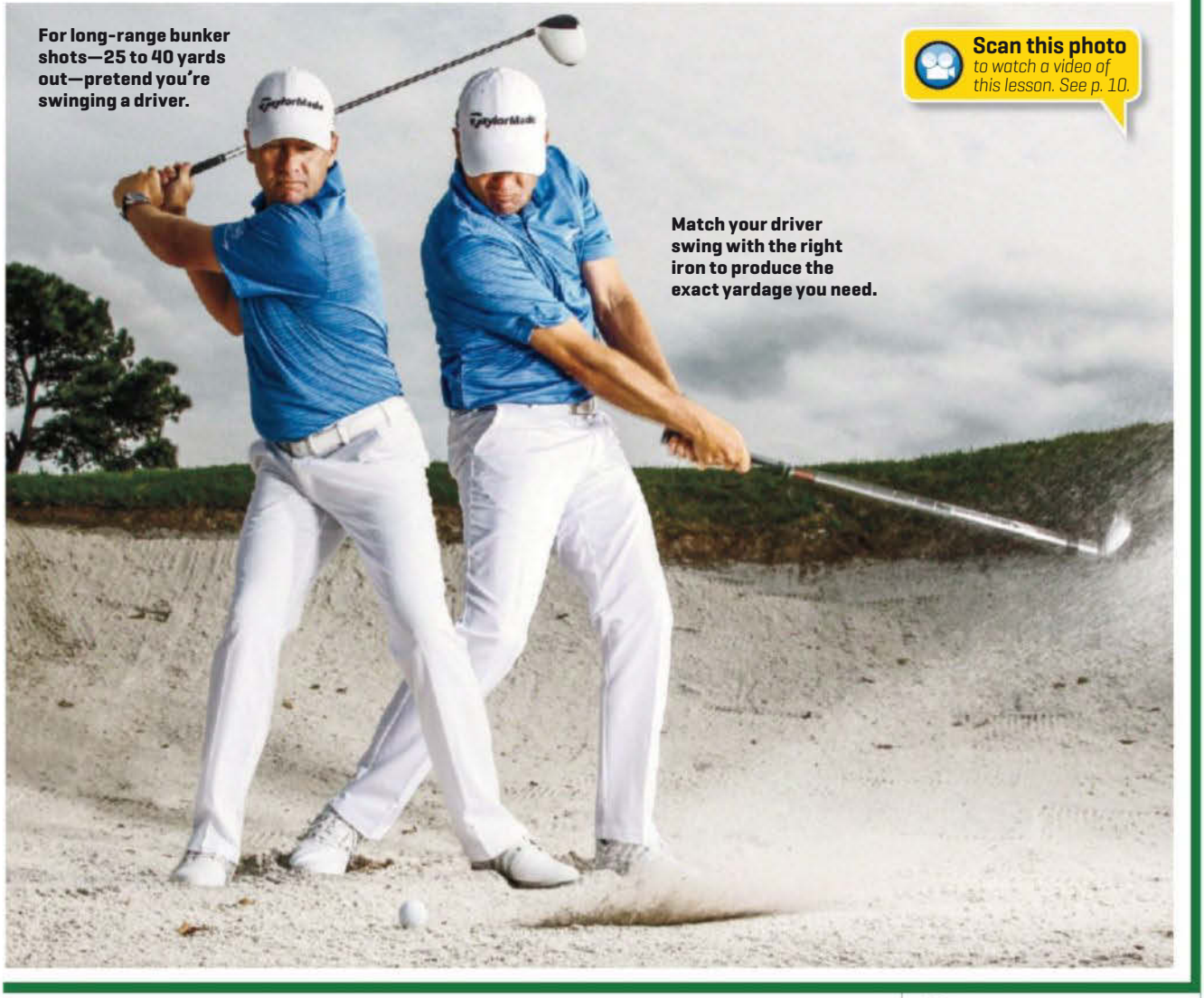
Use a power swing—not a finesse one—to make easy work of golf's toughest shot

Greenside bunker shots are pretty easy—just grab your sand wedge, slide the club through the sand with an easy swing, and smoothly pop the ball out. Things get dicey, however, the farther you are from the green. Hey, even Tour pros consider bunker shots from 25 to 40 yards among the most difficult challenges in golf. If you're like most everyday players, you tend to either leave these shots way short or blade the ball who knows where.

There's a trick to mastering what I call "distance" bunker shots: Stop treating them as you do greenside blasts. The word "distance" hints at how to correctly approach these situations. Instead of gently splashing the sand under the ball, go for a more powerful explosion shot. Opt for the full-swing setup and motion you'd use for your driver swing. That means full backswing, full coil and full speed. Pulling the appropriate club is pivotal. I've found that a standard driver-length swing, when paired with the following irons, offers consistent, accurate yardages from the beach:

GW: 25 yards **PW: 30 yards**
9-iron: 35 yards **8-iron: 40 yards**

Position the ball forward, open the clubface slightly, dig in your feet with your weight centered, and swing. Don't try to pick the ball cleanly—hit a few inches behind it, take some sand and make a full finish. Hey, you may not be a bomber off the tee, but your driver technique will help you go the distance on the hardest shot in golf.



For long-range bunker shots—25 to 40 yards out—pretend you're swinging a driver.

Match your driver swing with the right iron to produce the exact yardage you need.

Scan this photo *to watch a video of this lesson. See p. 10.*

ANGUS MURRAY (3)

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SERGIO GARCIA

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GOLF MAGAZINE'S Top 100 Teachers in America

Breaking into Fort Knox would be easier than breaking into our list of the best golf teachers in America. There are more than 28,000 PGA and LPGA of America members, and *Golf Magazine* selects only the 100 most elite instructors among them, all to help you hammer the ball longer and straighter, putt the lights out, and shoot your lowest scores ever. Every two years, we use a rigorous peer- and academic-review process to update the game's definitive list of teaching talent. This month, 11 extraordinary professionals join our roster. Here's the Class of 2015-16—along with a quick tip from each member of our rookie class.

SCOTT HAMILTON



Scott Hamilton Golf Academy at Cartersville C.C., Cartersville, Ga.
scotthamiltongolf.com, @ScottyhamCville

Teaching experience: 25 years
Notable awards: 2007 Georgia Section PGA Teacher of the Year
Lesson fee: $250/hr.
Noteworthy students: Steven Bowditch, Russell Henley, Chris Kirk, Brendon Todd and Boo Weekley
Quick tip that always works: *"At the top of your backswing, make sure the back of your left wrist is as flat as a pancake. Otherwise, the clubface won't be square at impact."*

SEAN HOGAN



Leadbetter Golf Academy, Orlando, Fla.
davidleadbetter.com

Full-time teaching experience: 20 years
Playing experience: Irish Amateur National Team (alongside Darren Clarke and Padraig Harrington)
Lesson fee: $200/hr.
Noteworthy students: Ben Curtis, Fredrik Jacobson and Lydia Ko
Quick tip that always works: *"Soften your arms and hands at address—literally shake out the tension. Tense muscles are slow muscles, and slow muscles won't help your golf swing. You want fast hands with good feel."*

CLAUDE HARMON III



Butch Harmon Floridian, Palm City, Fla.
butchharmonfloridian.com, @CH3golf

Teaching experience: 20 years
Lesson fee: $700/90 mins.
Noteworthy students: Ernie Els, Brooks Koepka and Peter Uihlein
Quick tip that always works: *"Spend your next practice session working only on contact. Don't worry about where the ball goes. Find a way to get the clubface square and your impact point in the center of the face. You can work on direction later."*

CAMERON McCORMICK



Brook Hollow G.C., Dallas, Texas
cameronmccormickgolf.com, @CMcCormickGolf

Teaching experience: 16 years
Notable awards: 2007 & 2013 North Texas Section PGA Teacher of the Year
Lesson fee: $225/hr.
Noteworthy students: Jordan Spieth, my daughter Bella, 6, and son Callan, 5.
Quick tip that always works: *"When hitting short-game shots, narrow your stance. Make it just inside hip width. This will help your hips turn and your knees to move toward the target—subtle moves that ensure crisp contact."*

LYNN MARRIOTT



Vision54, Talking Stick G.C., Scottsdale, Ariz.
vision54.com, @VISION54

Teaching experience: 32 years
Notable awards: 2010 Southwest Section PGA Teacher of the Year, 2008 LPGA Ellen Griffin Rolex Award, 1992 LPGA National Teacher of the Year
Lesson fee: $350/hr.
Noteworthy students: Na-yeon Choi, Russell Knox, Grace Park and Suzann Pettersen
Quick tip that always works: *"Find your best tempo. How? Make a full swing at 50 percent full speed, then 75 percent and finally full throttle. You might find that you hit it farther with a slower swing."*

JAMIE MULLIGAN



Virginia C.C., Long Beach, Calif.

Teaching experience: 32 years
Notable awards: 1999 & 2000 Southern California Section PGA Teacher of the Year
Noteworthy students: Patrick Cantlay, John Cook, Veronica Felibert, Paul Goydos, Max Homa, Luke List, John Mallinger, John Merrick and Peter Tomasulo
Quick tip that always works: *"Copy the way world-class players go through their routines. It's the same every time. Your mind doesn't know bad habits from good ones. It only knows what you train it to do. Train for consistency."*

PIA NILSSON



Vision54, Talking Stick G.C., Scottsdale, Ariz.
vision54.com, @VISION54

Teaching experience: 26 years
Playing experience: LPGA Tour (1983-87)
Notable awards: 1998 King's Medal (Sweden), 1996 Swedish Coach of the Year (all sports)
Lesson fee: $350/hr.
Noteworthy students: Russell Knox, Suzann Pettersen, Annika Sorenstam and Kevin Streelman

Quick tip that always works: *"Pay attention to what you do when you play well. Start a journal, and list three thoughts, moves or shots that always seem to fuel solid rounds."*

BERNIE NAJAR



Caves Valley G.C., Owings Mills, Md.
bernienajar.com, @BernieNajarGolf

Full-time teaching experience: 21 years
Notable awards: 2004 & 2014 Mid-Atlantic Section PGA Teacher of the Year
Lesson fee: $200/hr.
Noteworthy students: Keith Unikel (2014 Mid-Atlantic Am.) and Matt Oshrine (Top-50 collegian)

Quick tip that always works: *"Stay light on your feet at address, and as you take the club away, push off the ground slightly with your front foot. This gives you a smooth flow from start to finish. You'll notice the difference immediately."*

ROB NOEL



Rob Noel Golf Academy at Money Hill, Abita Springs, La.
robnoelgolfacademy.com, @robnoelgolf

Full-time teaching experience: 29 years
Notable awards: 1993, 2000, 2009, 2011 & 2014 Gulf States Section PGA Teacher of the Year
Lesson fee: $140/hr.
Noteworthy students: Ken Looper (multiple NGA Tour winner) and John Riegger (Champions Tour)

Quick tip that always works: *"If it isn't broke, don't fix it. Working on something that is perfectly acceptable is a waste of time. Focus on weaknesses, not strengths."*

E.A. TISCHLER



Olympia Fields C.C., Olympia Fields, Ill.
newhorizonsgolf.com

Full-time teaching experience: 26 years
Playing experience: Won more than 30 mini-tour events with 15 course records
Lesson fee: $250/hr.
Noteworthy students: Scott McCarron, Tom Pernice Jr., Stan Utley, Laurie Rinker and Dean Wilson

Quick tip that always works: *"Stay true to yourself. In golf that means developing your style of play and staying committed to it. Keep your ego out of it and find the identity that works best for your game."*

HEADSHOTS: ANGUS MURRAY

V.J. TROLIO



Old Waverly G.C., West Point, Miss.
troliogolf.com, @VTROLIO

Teaching experience: 16 years
Notable awards: 2008 & 2010 Gulf States Section PGA Teacher of the Year
Lesson fee: $125/hr.
Noteworthy students: Jonathan Randolph, Carlos Sainz Jr., Jim Gallagher Jr. and Brian Henninger

Quick tip that always works: *"You'll improve faster practicing in front of a mirror in your own home than you will emptying a dozen buckets on the range. Make the course—not the practice field—your proving ground."*

Top 100 by the Numbers

96 Number of Top 100 alumni

14 Former Top 100 Teachers inducted into *Golf Magazine*'s World Golf Teachers Hall of Fame.

10 Number of women instructors in the Top 100

25 Number of teachers who have remained on the active list since its inception in 1996.

39 Number of active Top 100 members and alumni (28 men and 11 women) who have been named "National Teacher of the Year" by the PGA or LPGA.

22 Number of Top 100 active members who instruct in Florida (Texas is home to 13 and California is home to 10).

31 Percentage of teachers who have been on the active list for four years or less, indicating *Golf Magazine*'s emphasis on discovering emerging talent.

27 Average number of years of teaching experience among the Top 100 Teachers in America.

HOW WE SELECT THE TOP 100 TEACHERS IN AMERICA

Step 1 *Golf Magazine* receives applications from PGA and LPGA of America members. Applications are posted on Golf.com.

Step 2 The Top 100 Credentials Committee reviews the applications (about 250 per cycle) to confirm base qualifications (minimum 15 years teaching experience and 750 hours of annual full-time teaching).

Step 3 Applications are distributed among 20 current Top 100s and World Golf Teachers Hall of Fame members for review. Each application is analyzed by at least three individuals. The results are forwarded to the Top 100 Selection Committee for final recommendation to *Golf Magazine*.

Step 4 *Golf Magazine* compares recommended applicants to the current list, and adjusts the roster according to merit. Typically, six to 12 new teachers are added to the active Top 100 list per cycle.

A look at the nation's most exclusive—and most effective—team of teaching experts

Eric Alpenfels, PGA
Facility: Pinehurst Resort, Pinehurst, N.C.
Website: pinehurst.com
Top 100 since: 2001

Cheryl Anderson*, PGA, LPGA
Facility: Mike Bender Golf Academy at Magnolia Plantation G.C., Lake Mary, Fla.
Website: mikebender.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Todd Anderson*, PGA
Facility: Sea Island Golf Performance Center, St. Simons Island, Ga.
Website: seaisland.com
Top 100 since: 2003

Mike Bender*, PGA
Facility: Mike Bender Golf Academy at Magnolia Plantation G.C., Lake Mary, Fla.
Website: mikebender.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Mike Bennett
Facility: Stack & Tilt Golf
Website: stackandtilt.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Mark Blackburn, PGA
Facility: Greystone G.C., Birmingham, Ala.
Website: blackburngolf.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Steve Bosdosh, PGA
Facility: Four Streams, Beallsville, Md.
Website: fourstreams.com
Top 100 since: 2001

Michael Breed*, PGA
Facility: Michael Breed Golf Academy, Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point, Bronx, N.Y.
Website: michaelbreed.com
Top 100 since: 2003

Brad Brewer, PGA
Facility: Shingle Creek, Orlando, Fla.
Website: bradbrewer.com
Top 100 since: 2007

Former PGA or LPGA National Teacher of the Year

Henry Brunton
Facility: Henry Brunton Golf Academy, Maple, Ont.
Website: henrybrunton.com
Top 100 since: 2005

Anne Cain, LPGA
Facility: PGA Tour Academy, St. Augustine, Fla.
Website: annecaingolf.com
Top 100 since: 2007–2010, 2013

Jason Carbone, PGA
Facility: Baltusrol G.C., Springfield, N.J.
Top 100 since: 2007

Chris Como
Facility: Gleneagles C.C., Plano, Texas
Website: chriscomogolf.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Donald Crawley, PGA
Facility: Boulders Golf Academy, Carefree, Ariz.
Website: golfsimplified.com
Top 100 since: 1999

Mike Davis, PGA
Facility: Walters Golf Academy, Las Vegas, Nev.
Website: mikedavisgolf.net
Top 100 since: 2007

Glenn Deck, PGA
Facility: Pelican Hill Resort, Newport Beach, Calif.
Website: pelicanhill.com
Top 100 since: 2003

Dom DiJulia, PGA
Facility: Jericho National G.C., New Hope, Pa.
Website: dijuliagolf.com
Top 100 since: 2007

Krista Dunton*, PGA, LPGA
Facility: Berkeley Hall, Bluffton, S.C.
Website: kristadunton.com
Top 100 since: 2011

John Elliott Jr.
Facility: Golden Ocala Golf & Equestrian Club, Ocala, Fla.
Website: golfwithjme.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Chuck Evans
Facility: Tiffany Greens G.C., Kansas City, Mo.
Website: chuckevansgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2009

Sean Foley
Facility: Core Golf Academy, Windermere, Fla.
Website: coregolfacademy.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Eden Foster, PGA
Facility: Maidstone Club, East Hampton, N.Y.
Top 100 since: 2003

Bryan Gathright, PGA
Facility: Oak Hills C.C., San Antonio, Texas
Website: bryangathrightgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2001

Gary Gilchrist
Facility: Gary Gilchrist Golf Academy, Howey-in-the-Hills, Fla.
Website: ggga.com
Top 100 since: 2013

David Glenz*, PGA
Facility: David Glenz Golf Academy at Black Oak G.C., Long Valley, N.J.
Website: davidglenz.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Rick Grayson, PGA
Facility: Rivercat G.C., Springfield, Mo.
Website: rickgraysongolf.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Fred Griffin, PGA
Facility: Grand Cypress Academy of Golf, Orlando, Fla.
Website: grandcypress.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Ron Gring, PGA
Facility: Terravita Golf & C.C., Scottsdale, Ariz.
Website: gringgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2003

Lou Guzzi*, PGA
Facility: Guzzi Golf Academy at Talamore C.C., Ambler, Pa.
Website: louguzzi.com
Top 100 since: 2011

Mark Hackett, PGA
Facility: Old Palm G.C., Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.
Top 100 since: 2009

Martin Hall*, PGA
Facility: Ibis Golf & C.C., West Palm Beach, Fla.
Top 100 since: 1996

Joe Hallett, PGA
Facility: Vanderbilt Legends Club, Franklin, Tenn.
Website: pgaguy.com
Top 100 since: 2011

Scott Hamilton, PGA
Facility: Cartersville C.C., Cartersville, Ga.
Website: scotthamiltongolf.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Hank Haney*, PGA
Facility: Hank Haney Golf, McKinney, Texas
Website: hankhaney.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Bill Harmon
Facility: Toscana C.C., Indian Wells, Calif.
Website: toscanacc.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Claude Harmon III
Facility: Butch Harmon Floridian, Palm City, Fla.
Website: butchharmonfloridian.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Craig Harmon, PGA
Facility: McArthur G.C., Hobe Sound, Fla.
Top 100 since: 1996

Michael Hebron*, PGA
Facility: Smithtown Landing G.C., Smithtown, N.Y.
Website: mikehebron.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Sean Hogan
Facility: Leadbetter Golf Academy, Orlando, Fla.
Website: davidleadbetter.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Shawn Humphries
Facility: Grapevine G.C., Grapevine, Texas
Website: shawnhumphries.com
Top 100 since: 2005

Ed Ibarguen, PGA
Facility: Duke University G.C., Durham, N.C.
Website: golf.duke.edu
Top 100 since: 2001

Eric Johnson, PGA
Facility: Oakmont C.C., Oakmont, Pa.
Website: ericjohnsongolf.com
Top 100 since: 2011

Charlie King, PGA
Facility: Reynolds Golf Academy, Greensboro, Ga.
Website: reynoldsgolfacademy.com
Top 100 since: 2003

Jerry King, PGA
Facility: Makena Golf & Beach Club, Wailea-Makena, Hawaii
Website: jerrykinggolf.com
Top 100 since: 2009

Kevin Kirk, PGA
Facility: The Woodlands C.C., The Woodlands, Texas
Website: thewoodlandscc.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Peter Kostis
Facility: Kostis-McCord Learning Center, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Website: kostismccordlearning.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Mike LaBauve, PGA
Facility: Westin Kierland Resort, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Website: labauvegolf.com
Top 100 since: 1996

James Leitz, PGA
Facility: Tchefuncta C.C., Covington, La.
Website: leitzgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Rod Lidenberg, PGA
Facility: Halla Greens G.C. & Training Center, Chanhassen, Minn.
Website: pgamasterpro.com
Top 100 since: 2007

Jack Lumpkin*, PGA
Facility: Sea Island Golf Performance Center, St. Simons Island, Ga.
Website: seaisland.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Keith Lyford, PGA
Facility: Golf Academy at Old Greenwood, Truckee, Calif.
Website: lyfordgolf.net
Top 100 since: 1999

Tim Mahoney, PGA
Facility: Troon Golf Academy, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Website: timmahoneygolf.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Mike Malaska*, PGA
Facility: Superstition Mountain G.C., Superstition Mountain, Ariz.
Website: malaskagolf.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Brian Manzella, PGA
Facility: English Turn Golf & C.C., New Orleans, La.
Website: brianmanzella.com
Top 100 since: 2011

Lynn Marriott*, PGA, LPGA
Facility: Vision54, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Website: vision54.com
Top 100 since: 1996–2010, 2015



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Rick McCord, PGA
Facility: Orange Lake C.C., Orlando, Fla.
Website: themccordgolfacademy.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Cameron McCormick, PGA
Facility: Brook Hollow G.C., Dallas, Texas
Website: cameronmccormickgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Mike McGetrick*, PGA
Facility: Mike McGetrick Golf, Delray Beach, Fla.
Website: mikemcgetrickgolf.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Brian Mogg
Facility: Waldorf-Astoria G.C., Orlando, Fla.
Website: moggacademy.com
Top 100 since: 2005

Bill Moretti, PGA
Facility: Austin G.C., Austin, Texas
Website: morettigolf.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Jamie Mulligan, PGA
Facility: Virginia C.C., Long Beach, Calif.
Top 100 since: 2015

Scott Munroe, PGA
Facility: Nantucket G.C., Siasconset, Mass.
Website: moneygolf.net
Top 100 since: 2009

Jim Murphy, PGA
Facility: Sugar Creek C.C., Sugar Land, Texas
Website: jimmurphygolf.com
Top 100 since: 2003

Bernie Najar, PGA
Facility: Caves Valley G.C., Owings Mills, Md.
Website: bernienajar.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Pia Nilsson
Facility: Vision54, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Website: vision54.com
Top 100 since: 2001–2012, 2015

Rob Noel, PGA
Facility: Rob Noel Golf Academy, Abita Springs, La.
Website: robnoelgolfacademy.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Chris O'Connell
Facility: Plane Truth Golf, Plano, Texas
Website: planetruthgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Dave Pelz
Facility: Pelz Golf, Austin, Texas
Website: pelzgolf.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Mike Perpich, PGA
Facility: RiverPines G.C., Johns Creek, Ga.
Website: mikeperpich.com
Top 100 since: 2001

Gale Peterson*, PGA, LPGA
Facility: Sea Island Golf Performance Center, St. Simons Island, Ga.
Website: seaisland.com
Top 100 since: 1996

E.J. Pfister, PGA
Facility: Oak Tree National, Edmond, Okla.
Website: ejpfistergolf.com
Top 100 since: 2009

Dave Phillips, PGA
Facility: Titleist Performance Institute, Oceanside, Calif.
Website: mytpi.com
Top 100 since: 2001

Andy Plummer
Facility: Stack & Tilt Golf
Website: stackandtilt.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Carol Preisinger*, LPGA
Facility: The Kiawah Island Club, Kiawah Island, S.C.
Website: carolpreisinger.com
Top 100 since: 2005

Nancy Quarcelino*, PGA
Facility: Kings Creek G.C., Spring Hill, Tenn.
Website: qsog.com
Top 100 since: 2003

Dana Rader*, LPGA
Facility: Ballantyne Resort, Charlotte, N.C.
Website: danarader.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Brady Riggs, PGA
Facility: Woodley Lakes G.C., Van Nuys, Calif.
Website: bradyriggs.com
Top 100 since: 2007

Don Sargent, PGA
Facility: Scioto C.C., Columbus, Ohio
Website: sciotocc.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Adam Schriber, PGA
Facility: LochenHeath G.C., Williamsburg, Mich.
Website: lochenheath.com
Top 100 since: 2009

Craig Shankland*, PGA
Facility: LPGA International, Daytona Beach, Fla.; Maroon Creek Club, Aspen, Colo.
Top 100 since: 1996

Mike Shannon, PGA
Facility: Sea Island Golf Performance Center, St. Simons Island, Ga.
Website: seaisland.com
Top 100 since: 2011

Ted Sheftic, PGA
Facility: Bridges G.C., Abbottstown, Pa.
Website: tedsheftic.com
Top 100 since: 2003

James Sieckmann, PGA
Facility: Shadow Ridge C.C., Omaha, Neb.
Website: jsegolfacademy.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Laird Small*, PGA
Facility: Pebble Beach Golf Academy, Pebble Beach, Calif.
Website: pebblebeach.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Kevin Smeltz
Facility: International Junior Golf Academy, Hilton Head Island, S.C.
Website: ijga.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Randy Smith*, PGA
Facility: Royal Oaks C.C., Dallas, Texas
Top 100 since: 2001

Rick Smith, PGA
Facility: Treetops Resort, Gaylord, Mich.
Website: ricksmith.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Todd Sones, PGA
Facility: Scoring Zone Schools at White Deer Run G.C., Vernon Hills, Ill.
Website: toddsones.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Mitchell Spearman
Facility: Isleworth Golf & C.C., Windermere, Fla.
Website: mitchellspearman.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Mark Steinbauer, PGA
Facility: Carlton Woods, The Woodlands, Texas
Top 100 since: 2011

Kellie Stenzel, PGA, LPGA
Facility: Boca Raton Resort & Club, Boca Raton, Fla.
Website: kelliestenzelgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2009

Tom Stickney
Facility: Bighorn G.C., Palm Desert, Calif.; Promontory G.C., Park City, Utah
Website: tomstickneygolf.com
Top 100 since: 2007

Dr. Jim Suttie*, PGA
Facility: TwinEagles, Naples, Fla.; Willow Hill G.C., Northbrook, Ill.
Website: jimsuttie.com
Top 100 since: 1996

Jon Tattersall, PGA
Facility: Fusion ATL, Atlanta, Ga.
Website: terminusclub.com
Top 100 since: 2007

E.A. Tischler
Facility: Olympia Fields C.C., Olympia Fields, Ill.
Website: newhorizonsgolf.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Dr. T.J. Tomasi, PGA
Facility: Keiser University, Port St. Lucie, Fla.
Website: tjtomasi.com
Top 100 since: 1999

V.J. Trolio, PGA
Facility: Old Waverly G.C., West Point, Miss.
Website: troliogolf.com
Top 100 since: 2015

Kevin Weeks, PGA
Facility: Cog Hill Golf & C.C., Lemont, Ill.
Website: kevinweeks.com
Top 100 since: 2013

Dr. David Wright, PGA
Facility: Wright Balance Golf Academy at Arroyo Trabuco G.C., Mission Viejo, Calif.
Website: wrightbalance.com
Top 100 since: 2005

Josh Zander, PGA
Facility: Presidio G.C., San Francisco, Calif.; Stanford University G.C., Palo Alto, Calif.
Website: zandergolf.com
Top 100 since: 2013

WORLD GOLF TEACHERS HALL OF FAME

Mike Adams, PGA
Facility: The Medalist Club, Hobe Sound, Fla.; Hamilton Farm G.C., Gladstone, N.J.
Website: mikeadamsgolf.com
Hall of Fame since: 2015

Peggy Kirk Bell*
Facility: Pine Needles, Southern Pines, N.C.
Hall of Fame since: 2004

Chuck Cook*, PGA
Facility: Chuck Cook Golf Academy, Austin, Texas
Website: chuckcookgolf.com
Hall of Fame since: 2015

Manuel de la Torre*, PGA
Facility: Milwaukee C.C., River Hills, Wis.
Website: manueldelatorregolf.com
Hall of Fame since: 2005

Jim Hardy*, PGA
Facility: Plane Truth Golf, Houston, Texas
Website: planetruthgolf.com
Hall of Fame since: 2015

Butch Harmon
Facility: Butch Harmon School of Golf, Henderson, Nev.
Website: butchharmon.com
Hall of Fame since: 2015

David Leadbetter
Facility: David Leadbetter Golf Academy, Orlando, Fla.
Website: davidleadbetter.com
Hall of Fame since: 2007

Jim McLean*, PGA
Facility: McLean Golf, Miami, Fla.
Website: jimmclean.com
Hall of Fame since: 2015

Eddie Merrins
Facility: Bel-Air C.C., Los Angeles, Calif.
Website: eddiemerrins.com
Hall of Fame since: 2008

Bob Toski
Facility: Toski-Battersby Learning Center, Coconut Creek, Fla.
Website: learn-golf.com
Hall of Fame since: 1999

Dr. Gary Wiren*, PGA
Facility: Trump International, West Palm Beach, Fla.
Website: garywiren.com
Hall of Fame since: 2007

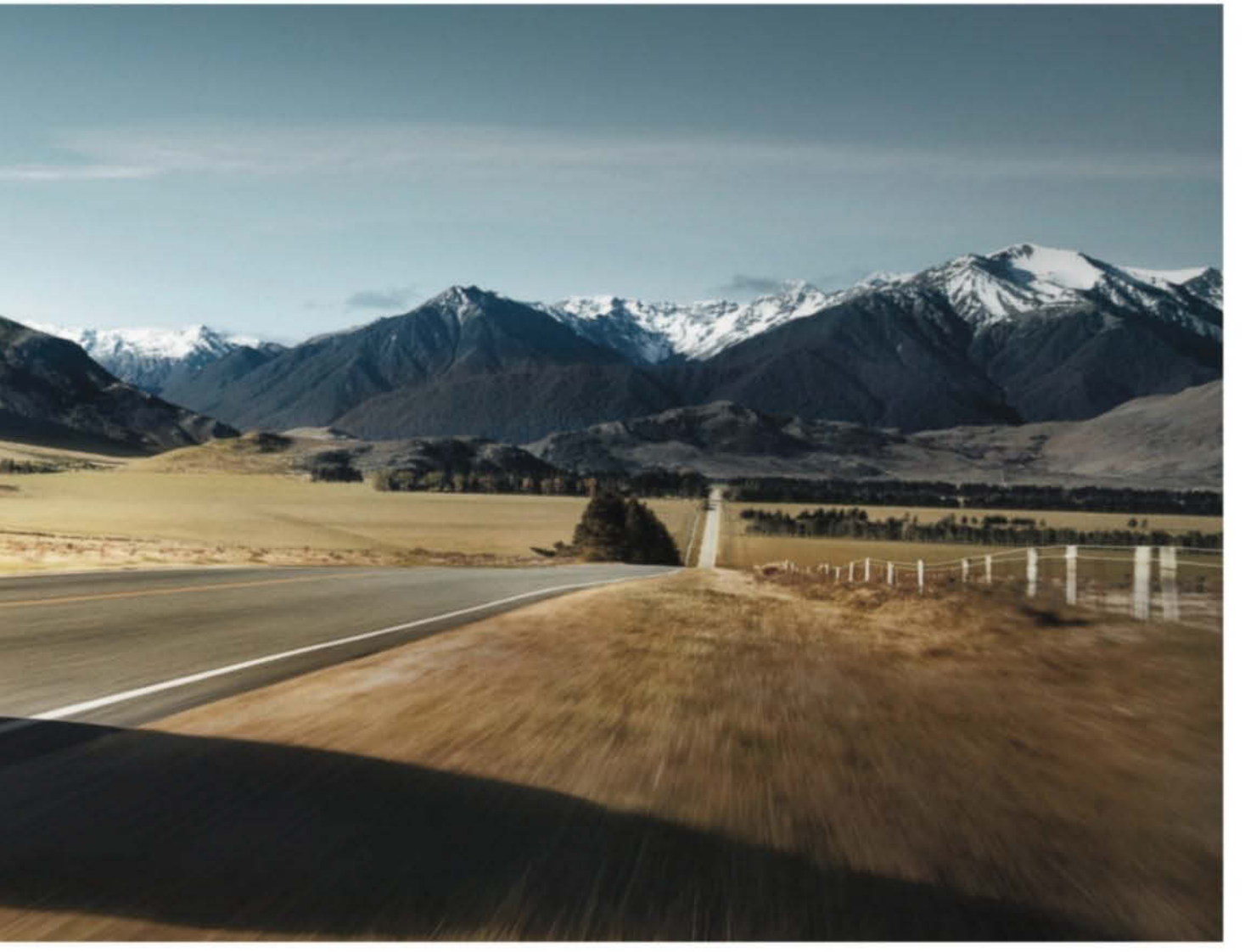
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Hope springs eternal, and so does the Masters, golf's true Opening Day. This year, Rory McIlroy eyes the career slam, Tiger Woods (if he's healthy) hopes to end a decade of futility at Augusta, and rising stars, seasoned veterans and graying greats all grasp at the jacket. Now let's slip into something *very* comfortable.

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THE PUTTS THAT WIN THE MASTERS
Ben Crenshaw reveals the perilous putts that must be tamed at Augusta. *p. 72*

BILLY GOES BIG
He tips big. He wins big. He loses big. Now FedEx Cup champ Billy Horschel looks to add a green jacket to his résumé. *p. 82*

BUBBA'S FINEST 5
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The freshly minted Tour winner brings his Dustin Johnson–like power to Augusta for the first time. *p. 91*

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IF AUGUSTA RAN...
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Photograph by Manfred Koh
Styling by Alma Melendez

→

Interview by Joe Passov
Illustrations by Graham Gaches
Augusta Hole Images by MillerBrown

The Putts That Win The Masters



Ben Crenshaw reveals his secrets for holing—or just plain surviving—the putts that earn you a green jacket

In 1984, Crenshaw's improbable birdie bomb on the 10th hole on Sunday propelled him to the first of his two triumphs at Augusta.

LEONARD KAMSLER

Ben Crenshaw plays his 44th and final Masters this year. Few have matched Gentle Ben's mastery of Augusta's not-so-gentle greens. He buried a 60-footer en route to his 1984 win. And when he slipped into his second green jacket, in 1995, he hadn't recorded a single three-putt. As the 63-year-old knows, all putts count equally at Augusta—but some are more equal than others. On the following pages, Crenshaw reveals the five pivotal putts that will make, or break, an aspiring Masters champion.

Turn to see special section!



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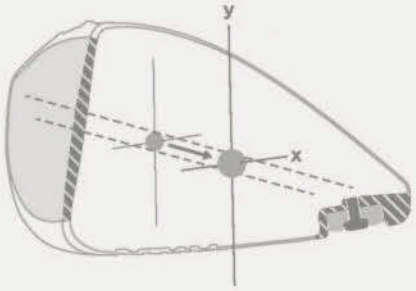


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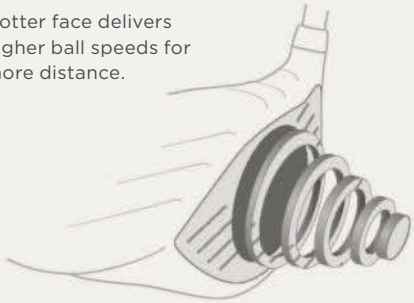
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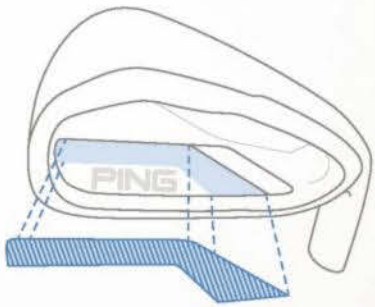
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The 2015 MASTERS

The Putts That Win The Masters



HOLE 5 "Magnolia"

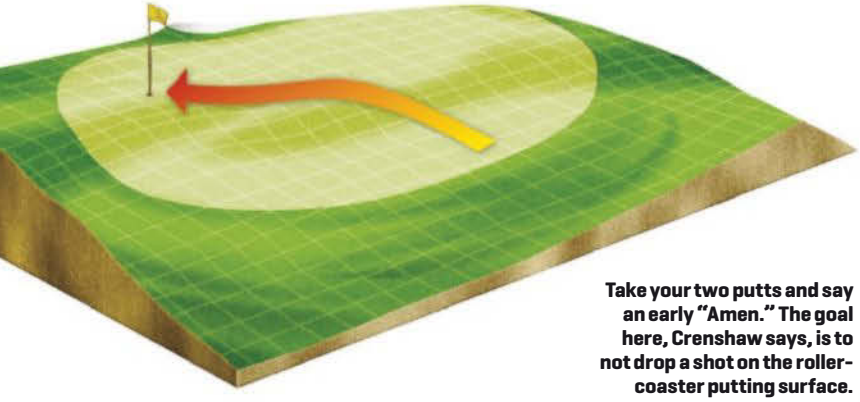
PAR 4



"The green has the same severe front face and angle to the fairway as the Road Hole at St. Andrews," Crenshaw says. "Rounded, convex undulations throw the ball right and left, making it one of Augusta's most unrelenting putting surfaces. If the pin is placed on the crest of the green or to the back-left, putts from the lower front part of the green are just so difficult. Most everybody will drop a shot here at some point, so your goal is to two-putt.

"You have to get it up over the crest, even if you're eight or 10 feet by. If you don't, the ball can trickle back to your feet. The safest miss is under the hole, so missing your first putt left of the hole is better. There are some god-awful slopes on this green that can make you look silly. The mentality is all about saving a stroke and avoiding bogey—or worse."

Signature Sunday Birdie Putt: Tom Watson, 1977, 10 feet, to take a two-stroke lead over Jack Nicklaus



Take your two putts and say an early "Amen." The goal here, Crenshaw says, is to not drop a shot on the roller-coaster putting surface.

HOLE 8 "Yellow Jasmine"

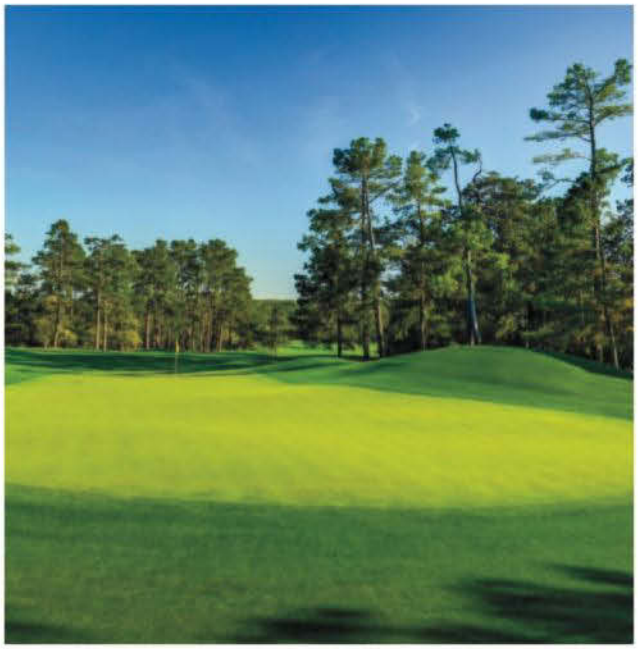
PAR 5

On No. 8, a birdie is almost essential, adding pressure to a makeable putt.

"If you're the leader or close to the lead," Crenshaw says, "you have to make a birdie 4 here to keep pace. That adds pressure. The toughest hole location lies just beyond the spine in the middle of the green, but on Sunday, the hole is usually cut back-left, an easier spot.

"The green is slippery in places, but it is receptive to a proper pitch, one that follows the contours and leaves you with an uphill, left-to-right putt. It's not a hard putt, except for the pressure of knowing you need to make it just to stay with the field."

Signature Sunday Birdie Putt: Nick Faldo, 1996, 20 feet, cutting Greg Norman's lead to three shots





HOLE 10

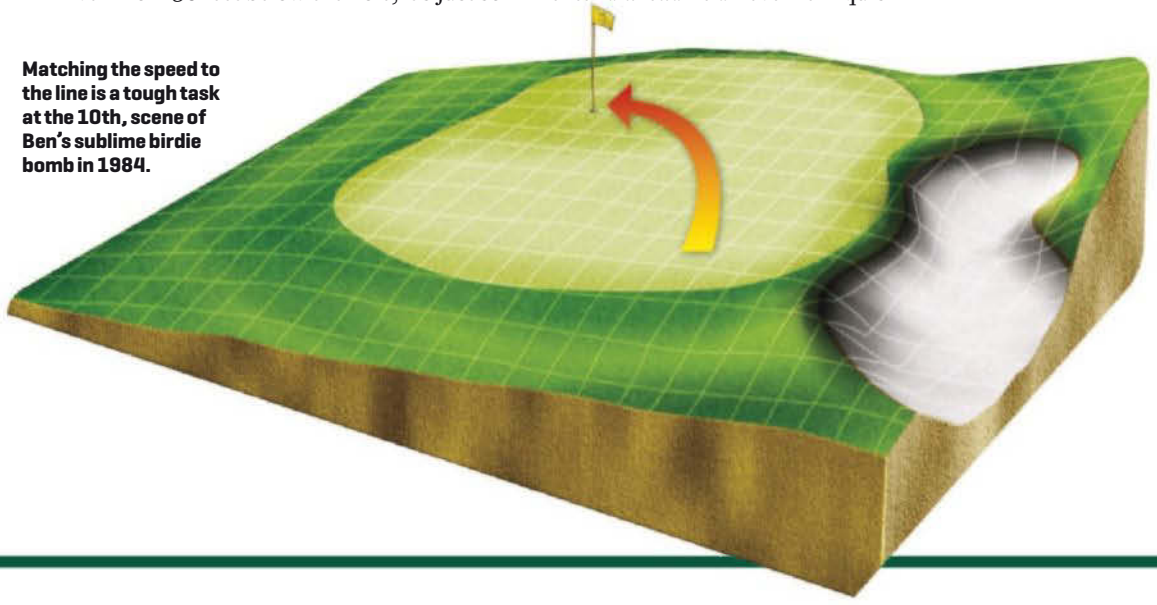
"Camellia"

PAR 4

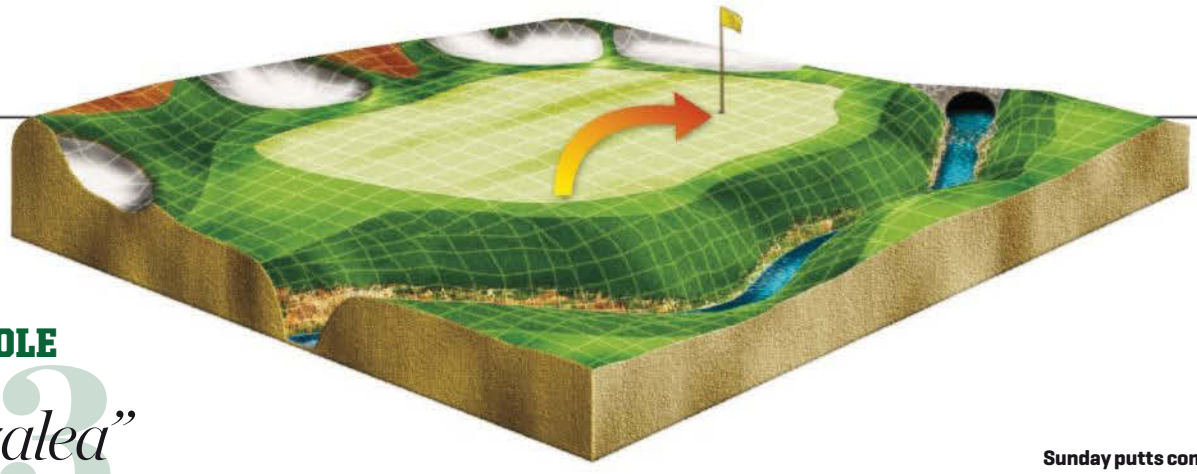
"With the hole cut back-left on Sunday, this is one of the hardest approach putts I've faced. The green is almost convex—a very slight dome—where the middle portion slopes to the front, then the rear portion falls away to the back. Shadows increase the difficulty of finding the proper pace. Hole No. 10 gave me perhaps my most exciting moment in golf in 1984's final round, when I holed that 60-footer with nine feet of break [for birdie]. I would have been happy to get it within five feet!

"Even from 30 feet below the hole, it's just so difficult to find the correct combination of speed and line. It's hard to imagine there can be so much break. The slope is right to left and up the hill, making the best leave on the lower side, so that you have a par putt back up the hill. Hit your approach putt too short or too long and you'll have a devil of a time making 4."

Signature Sunday Birdie Putt: Crenshaw, 1984, 60 feet (his third straight birdie) to extend a lead he'd never relinquish



Matching the speed to the line is a tough task at the 10th, scene of Ben's sublime birdie bomb in 1984.



HOLE 13

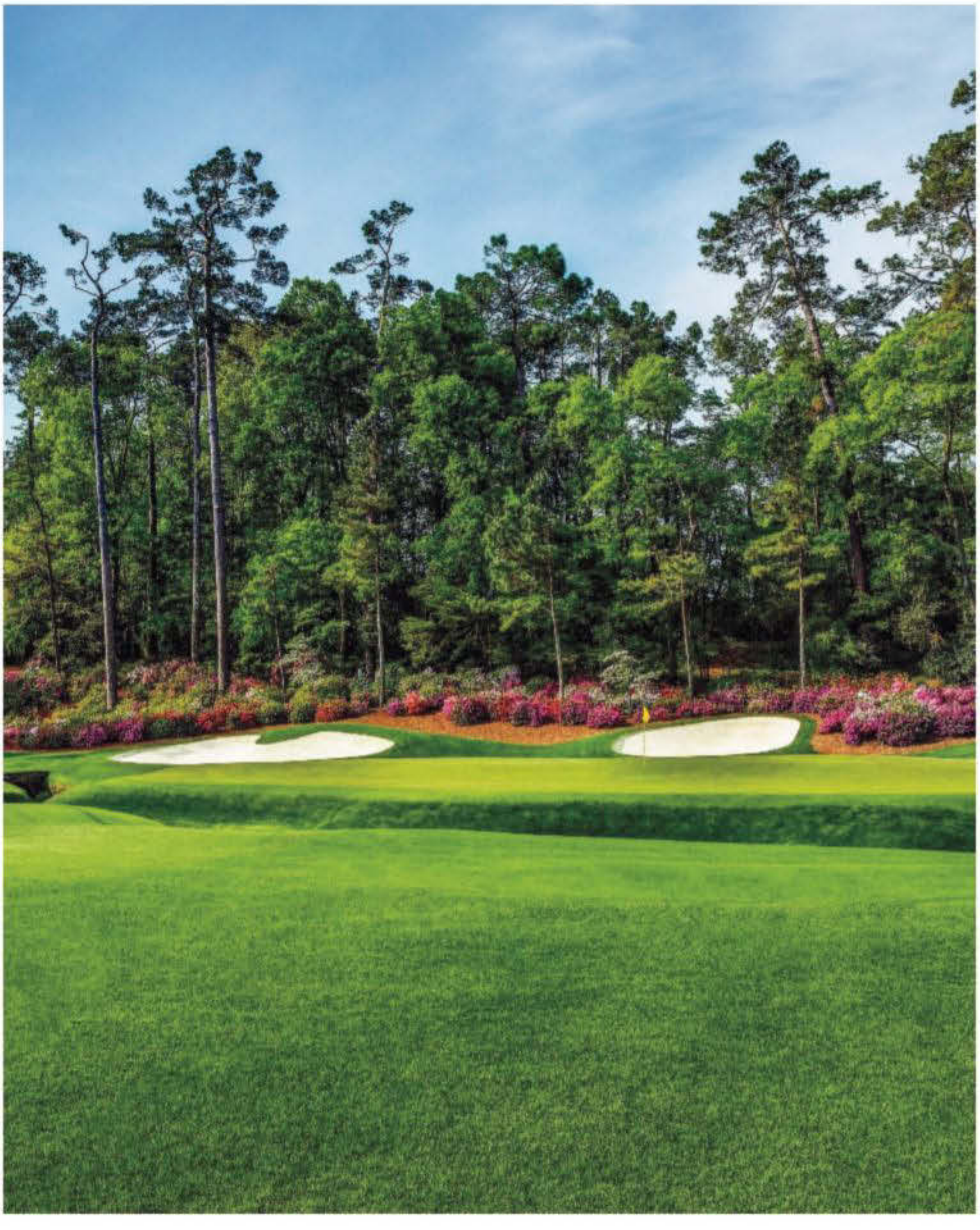
"Azalea"

PAR 5

"This hole is vulnerable to birdies and eagles, so you feel you have to make 4 just to keep pace. On Sunday, the hole is typically set up on the right side, so most approach shots into the green wind up on the left side, to avoid the creek. This leaves a difficult putt—not quite a rainbow, but a good yard of left-to-right break on shorter putts. If the weather is good, and the course is firm and dry, the ball gets traveling. You might see 20 feet of break on a long-distance putt, especially to the back-right location.

"It's critical that you balance the need to be aggressive with the reality of how tricky this putt can be. You want the proper line and speed, but give it too much and you could putt it well past the hole, even into the creek. This happens more than anyone will admit. Yes, a 3 is great, but just make sure you get your 4."

Signature Sunday Birdie Putt: José María Olazábal, 1999, 20 feet, after playing partner Greg Norman made 25-footer for eagle



Sunday putts come from the left and have plenty of break—even the short ones—so aggression must be tempered.



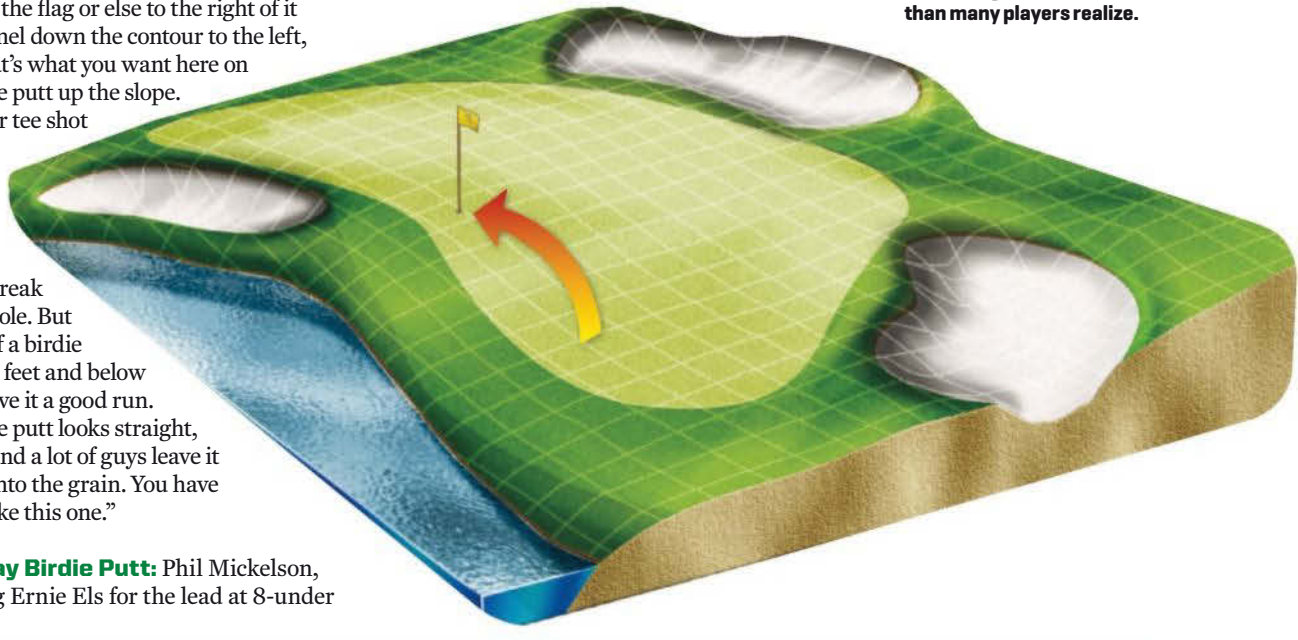
HOLE 16 "Redbud"

PAR 3

"With that Sunday pin, usually way back left, this hole has witnessed many dramatic moments—so many spectacular 2s. You have to hit the proper tee shot, either right at the flag or else to the right of it and let the ball funnel down the contour to the left, below the hole. That's what you want here on Sunday: a makeable putt up the slope.

"If you leave your tee shot too far right, your first putt is nearly impossible—even if you're pin-high to the right, you can't play enough break to stop it near the hole. But if you leave yourself a birdie putt from inside 20 feet and below the hole, you can give it a good run. That below-the-hole putt looks straight, but it breaks left—and a lot of guys leave it short, because it's into the grain. You have to find a way to make this one."

Signature Sunday Birdie Putt: Phil Mickelson, 2004, 15 feet, tying Ernie Els for the lead at 8-under



From the ideal spot below the hole, this crucial putt looks straight but isn't—and because of the grain, it's slower than many players realize.

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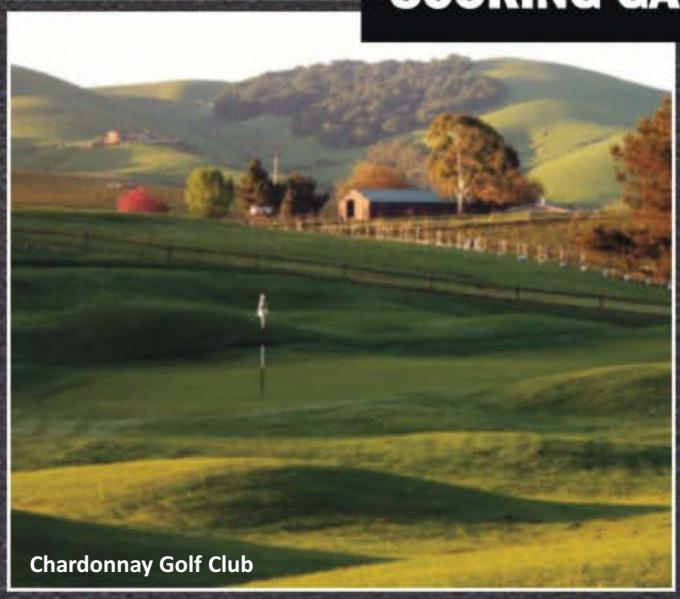
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Billy Goes Big

When he tips, he tips big. (Ask his caddie.) He loses big, too. (Remember that chunked 6-iron last year in Boston?) And when he wins, he bags back-to-back titles and takes the $10 million FedEx Cup, to boot. Now Billy Horschel sets his sights on the biggest prize of all: a green jacket.

By Cameron Morfit
Portrait by Andrew Hancock



The 2015 MASTERS



MIKE EHRMANN/GETTY IMAGES

A favorite of fans and fellow pros, Horschel is generous with his time and his money.

THE SUN WAS SETTING AT THE HUMANA Challenge in January when a little girl approached a stylish Tour pro as he walked to the locker room. To her, he looked like a cross between Christian Bale and Adam Levine, and so she asked for his autograph, which he gave. She asked for a picture with him, which he posed for. Then, flustered, the girl confessed that she didn't know who he was. "No, you're good," the pro said, smiling brightly, taking no offense, happy to introduce himself. "I'm Billy Horschel!"

Being Billy Horschel seems about as much as anyone could wish for these days. But becoming Billy Horschel, PGA Tour star, wasn't easy.

Just a few months earlier, at East Lake, he had walked off the final green at the Tour Championship and into the arms of his parents, Bill and Kathy. He'd just won the tournament and with it the FedEx Cup, culminating a three-week stretch in which he had earned nearly $13.5 million. In the emotional press conference that followed, Horschel, noting that neither his father nor mother had a college degree, called his family "blue-collar to a T." He also thanked his folks for giving him and his two brothers "such a great opportunity to do great things in this world without the means that other people have."

He added, "I'm going to take care of them very well."

Billy Horschel was not a country-club kid. Bill Horschel is a contractor; Kathy works as a supply-chain manager for a high-tech company. As a boy, to get access to free golf at the Majors Golf Club in Palm Harbor, Fla., Billy cleaned carts and picked range balls.

Modest beginnings have led to immodest riches. Horschel is acutely aware of this. He started taking care of his family long before he hit the FedEx megajackpot, buying his brothers new vehicles after notching his first Tour win, at the 2013 Zurich Classic of New Orleans.

"It was a shock," older brother Chris says. "We were at his house, and he said, 'I want to get you a car. Is that okay?' "

There are more car stories, and chartered planes, too. And acts of insane largesse. Horschel gave one tip with four zeroes in it and another with six—you read that right. Then there was the time he went in his pocket for 900 hoagies.

As generous as Santa, the man nicknamed "Billy Ho" might as well be "Billy Ho Ho Ho." He doesn't just say thanks, he shows thanks—in a big way. Because that's the Billy Horschel way. In everything he does, he doesn't go pedal to the metal, he goes right through the floorboard. Consider:

• Horschel isn't just lean, at 7 percent body fat; he's seriously athletic—and crazy competitive. Randy Myers, one of his two trainers, recalls someone suggesting that the swivel-hipped Rory McIlroy would make a fine sprinter. Upon hearing this, Horschel began talking up a possible race with the World No. 1, woofing that he could run a sub-4.8 40-yard dash.

• Horschel didn't just cliff-dive during the Hyundai Tournament of Champions at Kapalua Resort in January; he also careened down the vertigo-inducing zip lines—and insisted his low-key caddie, Micah Fugitt, race him to the bottom.

• Horschel isn't merely clothes conscious; he sets aside a special pair of pants for major-championship Sundays, infamously busting out his octopus-print trousers at the 2013 U.S. Open at Merion.

On paper, this can all sound, well, a bit much. In reality, it's just good old-fashioned, grab-life-by-the-golf-balls gusto.

"A lot of guys grow up wanting to play on the PGA Tour," says friend and fellow Tour pro Matt Every, who was a senior at

Horschel likes his Masters chances. "I wasn't intimidated at all" by Augusta in 2014, he says. "A course is a course."

the University of Florida when Horschel arrived as a freshman. "But he *really* wants to be where he's at now. He's wanted to be Mr. PGA Tour his whole life, and he's there, and he loves it—and he's a good guy for the spot."

The job includes not just say-cheese glamour but the daily grind, too. At the Humana, as the sun settled behind the knife-edged mountains and the temperature plunged, Horschel stood on the near-empty driving range with his caddie, Fugitt, and his coach, Todd Anderson, working away. Horschel had shot 65, and he'd just secured those trophies and that life-changing money. Yet there was more to do. He hasn't won the Masters. He hasn't won a major. He's only 28.

"He's got more energy than my two-year-old," Every says. "Billy talks in his sleep. He never stops talking. After he won [the 2014 BMW Championship] in Denver, Jim Furyk and I were waiting for him at the airport because we were all going back to Jacksonville together. He was doing his press conference, and it was taking a while, and we were joking that Billy was like, 'Are you sure that's all the questions you guys want to ask?' "

"I don't think he sleeps that much," adds trainer Myers. "And I don't think he has a complacent bone in his body."

The three Horschel boys—Chris, Billy, and Brian—grew up in tiny Grant-Valkaria, on Florida's mid-Atlantic coast, about 90 minutes southeast of Orlando. They were known mostly for their baseball prowess. No-nonsense dad Bill, who still drives an old Ford pickup, stressed that if the brothers wanted to be great, they had to go out and get it. Middle son Billy took note. On the verge of ninth grade he gave up baseball for golf, and in high school he began showing something special.

"We'd be 125 yards away, and he'd say, 'Pick a spot on that green and I'll hit it,' " Chris, 41, recalls. "I'd be happy to hit the green, but I'd play along and pick a spot, and Billy would hit it to within five feet."

Money to travel was tight, so Horschel played regional tournaments in Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas, rarely competing in far-flung elite junior or amateur events. "He didn't play in big national tournaments because our parents were financially strapped," says Chris, the director of sports medicine at the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

According to Horschel's first coach, Alex Romanoff at the Habitat Golf Course in Brevard County, Fla., four Division I golf coaches told Bill Horschel that Billy wasn't Division I material. So it could have been damaging when Horschel shot 84 at the 2004 U.S. Junior at San Francisco's Olympic Club in front of Buddy Alexander, the golf coach at the University of Florida, Billy's first choice for college. Luckily, Alexander liked how Billy carried himself, and that "the ball came out of the cannon the same way every time."

With the coach eventually down to one scholarship left to give, Alexander made what he says was "a gut call" that paid instant dividends.

As a freshman in 2006, Horschel gravitated to the squad's senior leaders, including Every, and tried to soak up as much as he could. He became a first-team All-American as a freshman and SEC Player of the Year as a sophomore, the latter feat repeated as a senior.

"I'm a quick learner," Horschel says.

After his freshman year, Horschel, then 19, qualified for the 2006 U.S. Open (missing the cut), and shot a tournament- and USGA-record 60 at that year's U.S. Amateur. The next summer he starred for the winning U.S. team in the Walker Cup. But after he turned pro in 2009 and got through Q-School on his first try, things didn't go as planned in his rookie year on the PGA Tour.

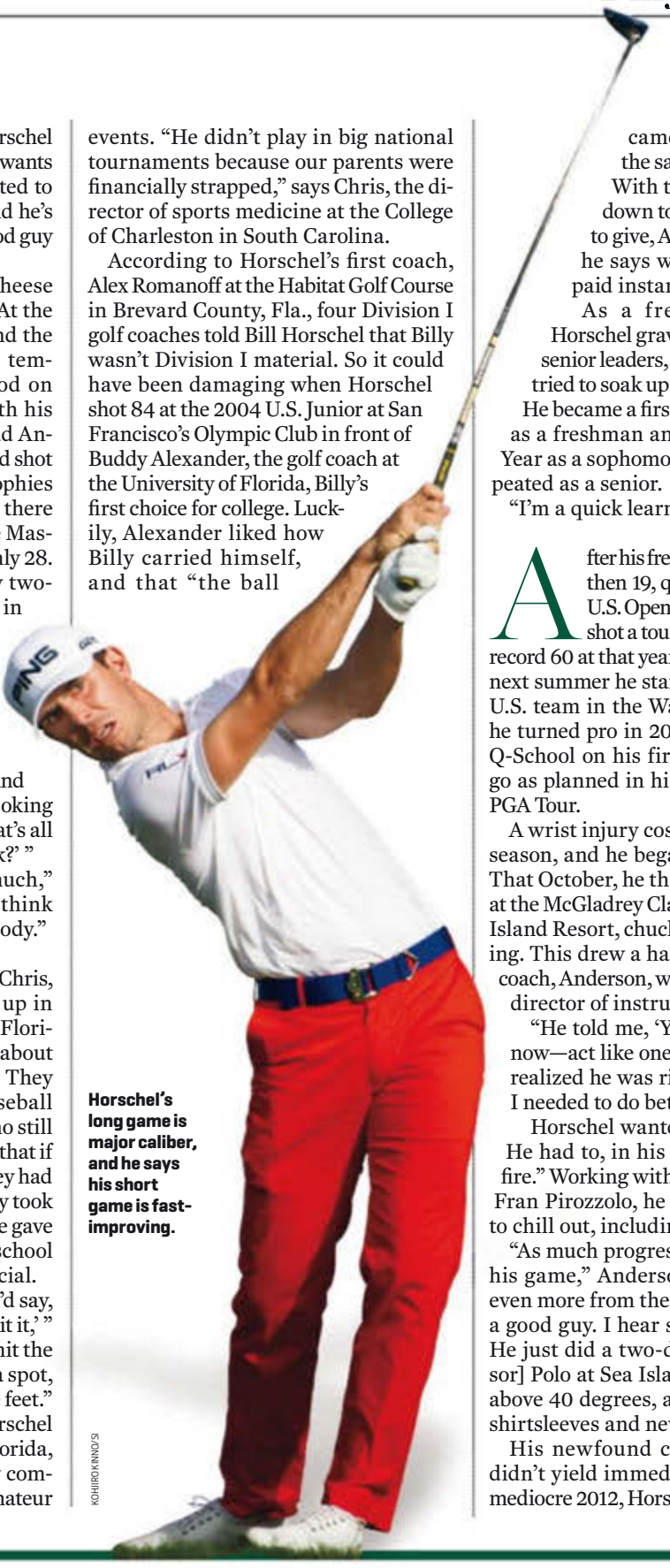
A wrist injury cost Horschel the 2010 season, and he began pressing in 2011. That October, he threw an on-course fit at the McGladrey Classic at Georgia's Sea Island Resort, chucking clubs and cursing. This drew a harsh rebuke from his coach, Anderson, who's also Sea Island's director of instruction.

"He told me, 'You're a professional now—act like one,' " Horschel says. "I realized he was right, it was bad, and I needed to do better."

Horschel wanted to win too much. He had to, in his words, "control the fire." Working with sports psychologist Fran Pirozzolo, he began finding ways to chill out, including meditation.

"As much progress as he's made with his game," Anderson says, "he's made even more from the standpoint of being a good guy. I hear so many comments. He just did a two-day shoot for [sponsor] Polo at Sea Island, and it never got above 40 degrees, and he's out there in shirtsleeves and never complained."

His newfound calm on the course didn't yield immediate results. After a mediocre 2012, Horschel cruised through



Horschel's long game is major caliber, and he says his short game is fast-improving.

KOHJIRO KINNO/SI

Billy Horschel





FAR LEFT: TED JACKSON, NOLA.COM/THE TIMES-PICAYUNE/LANDOV; LEFT: SCOTT HALLERAN/GETTY IMAGES

(Left) With the 2014 FedEx Cup. Horschel shared his windfall with his faithful caddie, Micah Fugitt (right), wiring his looper a cool $1 million.

Q-School, finishing T4, a sign of things to come. In addition to winning in New Orleans in 2013, he tied for fourth at the U.S. Open at Merion. The octopus pants stole the show on Sunday, but Horschel had done something even more outrageous and far more significant Friday, when he hit all 18 greens in regulation.

"I knew then that at some point, he's going to win a major," says caddie Fugitt.

"He's got a major-type game," Anderson adds. "Tee-to-green, he's already there. All we've got to do is get the short game up to that level."

The stats back up that assessment. In 2014, Horschel ranked third in ball striking but 144th in scrambling, 137th in sand saves and 57th in total putting. In his win at the Tour Championship in September, Horschel hit 57 of 72 greens (79 percent), six more than anyone else. When he putts well, as he did for those three playoff weeks in 2014, he's lethal.

"I was prepared mentally last year in the majors," Horschel says, "but was my game ready? I don't know, but I think this year is going to be different. My short game is better, my wedge game is getting there. I've seen some really good stuff early in the season."

Horschel is practiced in the art of self-analysis. With the trophy on the line at the Deutsche Bank Championship at TPC Boston last fall, he woefully mis-hit a 6-iron on No. 18 and watched his ball land in the hazard. Horschel didn't repress that failure. He scrutinized it. He and Anderson spoke at length about the shot. Only then did he move on—and in subsequent weeks icily closed out the BMW and the Tour Championship. The golf world was clucking about what a great Ryder Cup player he might have been at Gleneagles, had his heroics come sooner.

"Horschel, damn you," texted Tom Watson, whose U.S. captain's picks came right on the heels of the TPC Boston gaffe. "You are a day late, but not a dollar short."

In the wake of his FedEx windfall, Horschel tipped the locker room attendants at Tour Championship host East Lake $10,000. Soon after, he wired $1 million into the account of Fugitt, a 41-year-old former pawnbroker, construction worker and club caddie who had been dipping into his retirement fund before he hooked up with Horschel.

"I was speechless," Fugitt says. "I called my wife, Teresa. She started crying, and I don't think she stopped for about a week. Billy had told me after he won Zurich [in 2013], 'If I ever win the FedExCup, I'm going to pay you a million dollars.' I was, like, 'Yeah, okay.' [*Laughs*] He was true to his word. It's crazy."

Thanks to his employer's generous bonus, Fugitt and Teresa, who live in Waco, Texas, have moved into a bigger house with their two young children, who have been set up with a college fund.

Then Billy reached out again. He was planning a November father-son trip to Ping headquarters in Phoenix. This, he said, would mean bringing not only his dad, Bill, but his caddie and his caddie's father, all to be fitted for new clubs.

"My dad *loves* golf," Fugitt says.

While in Phoenix, Horschel also bought lunch for 900 Ping employees.

"We had a blast," Horschel says. "It worked out that I could buy everyone lunch just to tell them how much I appreciate everything they do. We had Jersey Mike's subs all made up and brought over to Ping. It was a great day."

Why just say thanks when you can show it? At the start of this year, Horschel commenced an endorsement contract with Lexus. The deal came with four cars, three of which he gave away—to his mom, his mother-in-law, and his wife, Brittany. Forget the Golf Channel: Horschel's moves come straight out of *The Oprah Winfrey Show.* ("You get a car! And *you* get a car! Everybody gets a car!")

Two days after his FedExCup win, Horschel received the ultimate gift when Brittany delivered their daughter, Skylar. The Horschels bought a new house in Ponte Vedra Beach that they're remodeling. It's bigger, to fit more family members when they come to visit at Christmas. He pursues other off-course interests, including American history, with typical vigor—a huge sports fan, Horschel chartered a plane and filled it with friends to go watch his beloved Florida Gators play football at Alabama last fall.

Still, a career year doesn't a career make. Horschel has yet to play in a Ryder Cup or win a major. The Masters? This will be his second start at Augusta National, where he finished 37th last year.

"I wasn't intimidated at all," Horschel says. "A golf course is a golf course, a fairway is a fairway, a green is a green, a hole is a hole. It's got some cool history with Bobby Jones and all, but nothing I felt in awe of. I think this year I'll feel a little more comfortable."

Can he win? It's a steep learning curve, but he seems to like his chances. As the man says, he's a fast learner. ■



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Bubba's Finest 5!

From water-defying cut shots to low-hooking wedges, we count down Bubba Watson's most mind-bogglingly masterful Masters shots. What's No. 1? The answer will surprise you.

By Ted Scott *with Cameron Morfit*
Illustrations by Graham Gaches

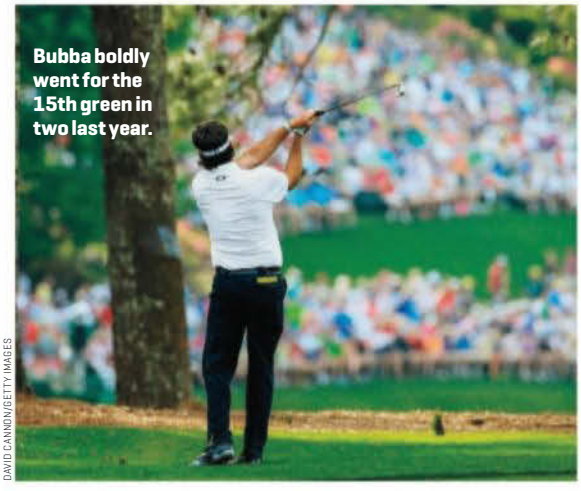


JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

A Tour caddie for 15 years and himself a scratch golfer, **Ted Scott** (above, right) is hard to impress. So it speaks to **Bubba Watson's** sublime shotmaking skills that the two-time Masters winner regularly makes his longtime looper's jaw drop. Scott counts down the five most amazing Masters shots Bubba ever hit—and No. 1 isn't what you think!

#5 2014, FINAL ROUND, PAR-5 15TH

181-yard 6-iron cut approach over water



Bubba boldly went for the 15th green in two last year.

DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES



"Last year everybody freaked out about this [choked-down 6-iron second] shot through trees and over water. The hard thing was hitting it far enough to carry the water. TV made it look super scary, but we had an angle to the trees to where even I could have hit it through. Could I have hit it over the pond? Doubtful. Bubba's distance control—to hit a cut that starts low and lands on the back of the green, down the stretch on Sunday—was impressive. He made par, which is all you need with a three-stroke lead."

#4 2012, 2ND ROUND, PAR-4 7TH

161-yard 9-iron approach through trees

"Bubba's tee shot ended up in the right rough. The pin was in that front-right bowl. Trees were in the way, so he couldn't hit a big ol' hook to get it on the green. I encouraged him to hit a low shot into the front bunker. He said, 'What about that gap there?' I look up at a 10-foot-wide circle way up in the trees about 50 yards away. Now, the farther away the gap, the smaller the target. And hitting it though there had him aiming right of the green, so if we don't cut it, we've got nothing for the third shot. But I don't argue with Bubba if he's confident–it's like telling Picasso he can't paint a painting. He hit a 9-iron cut shot through the gap to about six feet from the pin, straight up the hill. Skillwise, it was amazing."

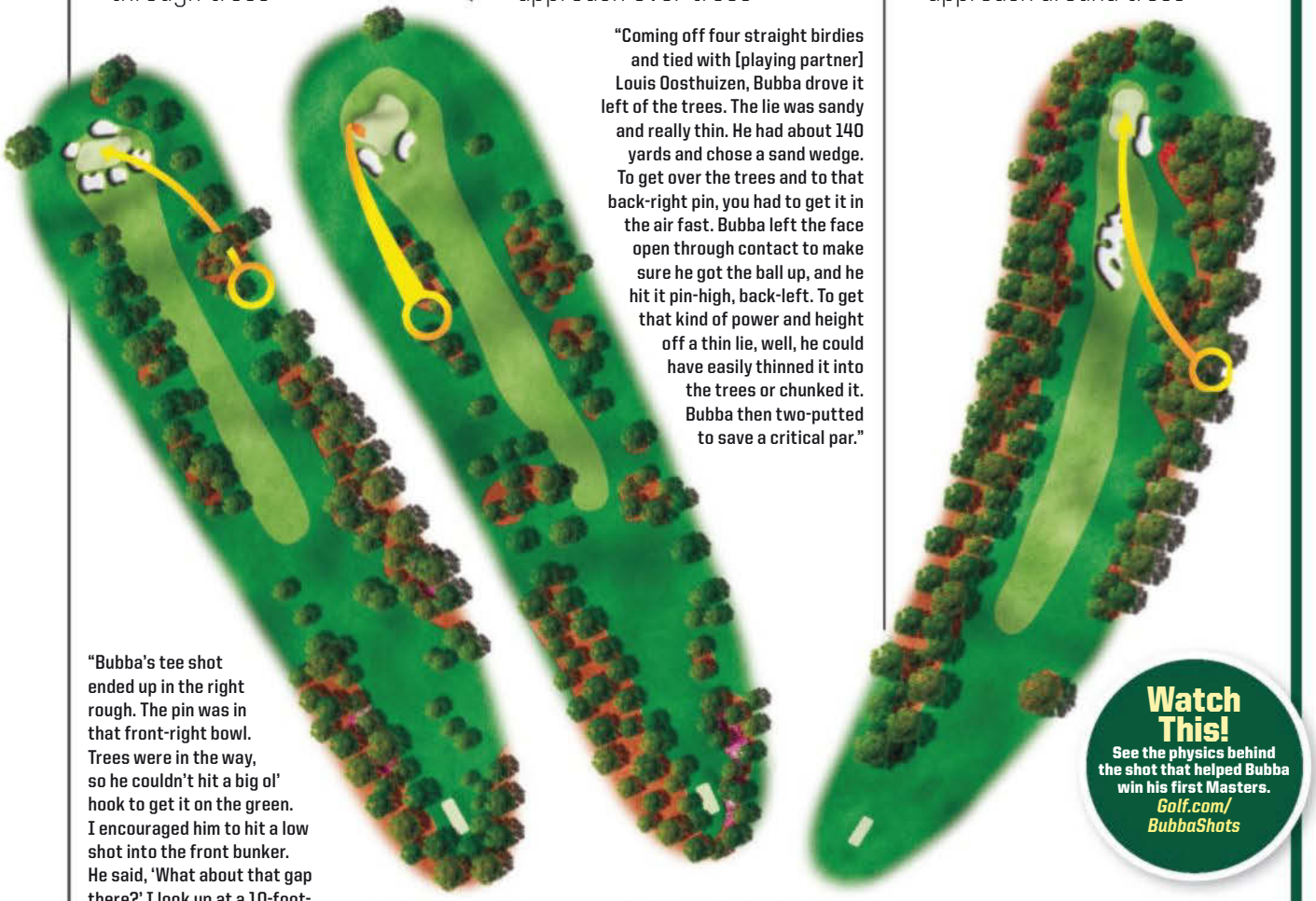
#3 2012, 4TH ROUND, PAR-4 17TH

140-yard sand wedge approach over trees

"Coming off four straight birdies and tied with [playing partner] Louis Oosthuizen, Bubba drove it left of the trees. The lie was sandy and really thin. He had about 140 yards and chose a sand wedge. To get over the trees and to that back-right pin, you had to get it in the air fast. Bubba left the face open through contact to make sure he got the ball up, and he hit it pin-high, back-left. To get that kind of power and height off a thin lie, well, he could have easily thinned it into the trees or chunked it. Bubba then two-putted to save a critical par."

#2 2012, PLAYOFF, PAR-4 10TH

164-yard gap wedge recovery/ approach around trees



Watch This!
See the physics behind the shot that helped Bubba win his first Masters.
Golf.com/BubbaShots



Bubba's hooked wedge in the 2012 playoff wasn't a swing and a prayer.

AL TIELEMANS/SI

"This is the famous wedge from the trees [right on] No. 10. [Watson would par the playoff hole to win his first green jacket.] It's actually the easiest of Bubba's great Masters shots. Now, give me 100 shots from there, and I couldn't hit the green, but for Bubba, it wasn't that hard. He had a firm lie, ball above his feet, and he had an opening. He just had to hit it hard and hook it, but doing it in a playoff and winning makes it more special. I equate this shot to Tiger making that six-footer on No. 18 to get into a playoff with Bob May at Valhalla [in the 2000 PGA Championship]. It was the high-pressure circumstances, more than the pure skill, that made it amazing."

Bubba's Finest 5!

#1 2012, 1ST ROUND, 11TH HOLE



180-yard 9-iron approach through trees and avoiding water

"This is the greatest–and stupidest–shot I've ever seen Bubba hit. After making bogey on 10, he hits his tee shot on 11 into the trees right, and pretty far. Now, the pin was about 18 yards on and in the center–easy to access, but his lie was terrible. The ball was sitting down in the pine straw, like an egg in a bird's nest. About 15 feet high there was a 10-foot-wide window to work with. It's very hard to hit it low from that nestled lie, and he had to aim at the scoreboard left of the water.

"I said, 'Punch it out, and you'll have the easiest wedge pin position on the course.' He said, 'But I'm known for hooking it.' I just couldn't compute that a person could hook it out of this lie. Plus, we'd be starting the ball at the scoreboard left, so we've got to hit it low and hook it enough to avoid the water. I was, like, 'What are you thinking?' Bubba said, 'Look, I got this. Back up.'

"I'm thinking, 'There's no chance–this is going in the water. We're looking at double-bogey, at best." Then Bubba hits it and over-hooks it! It catches the slope short-right in front of the green, runs off the mound, and trickles onto the center of the green, about 50 feet from the pin, where he two-putts for par.

"To this day, I can't wrap my mind around it. For him to even see that shot as an option…my last thought was, 'What kind of a freak are you?'"

"I don't argue with Bubba about a shot if he's confident—it's like telling Picasso he can't paint a painting."



JOHN BIEVER/SI (3)

"Freak" show: Out of the bird's nest, through the trees, under the branches, around the water…nothing but green.

By Cameron Morfit

International Man of Mystery

Meet Brooks Koepka, the young American (by way of Spain and Kazakhstan) with enough Dustin Johnson–like length to win the Masters. Could he grab the green jacket in his first try?

Before he ever won the Waste Management Phoenix Open in February, loudly announcing his arrival on the PGA Tour, Brooks Koepka had a choice to make. It was the spring of 2012, and he was leaving Florida State, where he'd twice been ACC Player of the Year. He could wait for fall's PGA Tour Q-School, or he could set out for Europe's minor-league Challenge Tour and get exemptions right away. Koepka picked the latter—and soon discovered that this meant encounters with lost taxi drivers, epic communication failures, and surprising new foods, including horsemeat in Kazakhstan.

Today Koepka is a Tour winner ready to play in his first Masters, so it all worked out. Although 2012 was turbulent—he won in Spain but flunked Q-School on his return home—the 6-foot, 186-pound bomber kept at it, sharpening his game with matches against peers like Rickie Fowler at Florida's Medalist GC and the Bear's Club. Koepka went back to Europe a better player in 2013 and reeled off wins in Italy, Spain and Scotland, earning a call-up to the European Tour. A T4 finish at last year's U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 punched his ticket to Augusta, and then came a T15 at the PGA Championship at Valhalla. Koepka also won the European Tour's Turkish Airlines Open in November.

All of which raises the obvious question: Horsemeat in Kazakhstan?

"It tasted like any other meat—I know Americans find that weird, but in Asia it's not out of the ordinary," Koepka says. "You've got to do what you've got to do—it's your job.

"Traveling isn't that big of a deal," he continues. "Sweden is cool—the girls are good-looking—and Stockholm is beautiful. Switzerland has some incredible views, and you can get or do most anything you can imagine in Dubai."

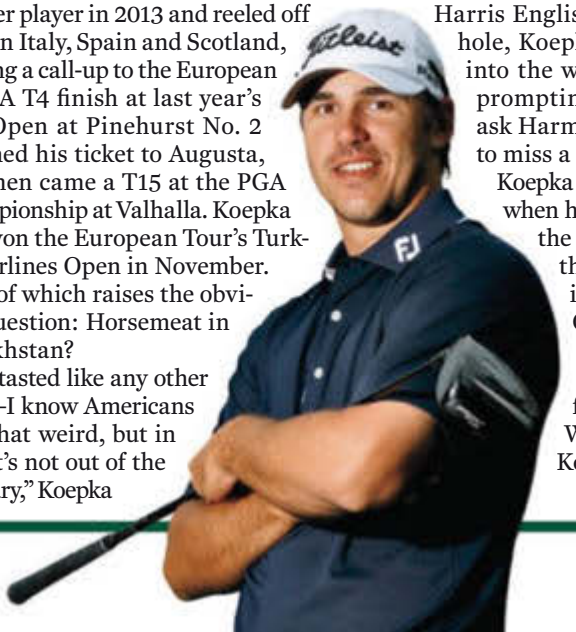
Koepka (pronounced "KEP-ka") is hardly a household name in America, but his coach, Claude Harmon III, says the 24-year-old had impressed Tour insiders well before his 64-66 on Super Bowl weekend for his first PGA Tour win. At the 2013 British Open at Muirfield, Koepka and Peter Uihlein, one of his three roommates in Jupiter, Fla., were playing a practice-round match against Phil Mickelson and Fowler when Koepka hit a shot so good—so "classy," as Harmon put it—into a stiff breeze on a par 3, that Jim Mackay, Mickelson's caddie, turned to Harmon and said, "Your boy can play."

Another match that week saw Koepka and Adam Scott take on Ernie Els and Harris English. On the par-5 fifth hole, Koepka blistered a 5-iron into the wind to reach in two, prompting a wowed Scott to ask Harmon, "Is this kid going to miss a shot today?"

Koepka did succumb to nerves when he met Tiger Woods on the practice green before their final-round pairing at the 2013 PGA Championship. He found himself watching Woods like a moony fan. Nevertheless, Woods saw enough in Koepka's scratchy 77 to deem him a "really talented, good kid."

"Kid" now applies more to Koepka's little brother, Chase, a junior at the University of South Florida and one of America's top amateurs. Brooks Koepka is playing like a man, supplementing his Dustin Johnson–like length off the tee with a shored-up short game that should prove handy at Augusta.

Like Scott, Rory McIlroy, Graeme McDowell and others, Koepka aspires to be a world player and will keep memberships on both the PGA and European tours in 2015. Harmon thinks this will be Koepka's "breakout season," which he says would mean, among other things, making the 2015 Presidents Cup team that will travel to South Korea in October. There are no guarantees, except maybe one: His passport is up to date.



PLAYING ROOKIE

Three more first-timers to watch this year



Erik Compton *Age: 35*
Qualified by: Top-4 finish, 2014 U.S. Open
Scouting Report: The two-time heart transplant recipient's made-for-Hollywood story hits another peak at Augusta National. At press time, Compton ranked 6th on the PGA Tour in Strokes Gained Putting.



Seung-yul Noh *Age: 23*
Qualified by: Winning 2014 Zurich Classic of New Orleans
Scouting Report: The youngest winner on Tour last year also has victories on the European, Asian and Web.com tours. He's consistent tee to green, ranking in the top 40 in driving distance and GIR in 2014.



Brian Harman *Age: 28*
Qualified by: Winning 2014 John Deere Classic
Scouting Report: Harman's a small guy (5'7") who largely makes up for a lack of distance with his putter. The local boy, born in Savannah, Ga., was a three-time All-American at the University of Georgia.

MAIN PHOTO: WARREN LITTLE/GETTY IMAGES; INSETS, T TO B: JEFF GROSS/GETTY IMAGES; ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT BECK/SI

The 2015 MASTERS

By Joe Passov



Augusta National's renowned course design continues to impact layouts around the country

The Influencer

Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters have an unmatched record of innovation. Among many forward-thinking ideas, the Masters has given us the concept of red and green scoreboard numbers signifying under par and even or over par; placed viewing stands on its grounds; and installed its SubAir system to keep greens healthy via proper temperature and moisture levels. What's more, the club has sought to grow the game globally via the Asia-Pacific Amateur and the Latin America Amateur championships. And let's not forget the utterly charming Drive, Chip and Putt contest for kids (ages 7 to 15) that heralds Masters week.

However, fewer laurels are thrown in Augusta's direction for its course-design influence. Lost amid the chatter about clubs trying to match Augusta's pristine conditioning is the remarkable influence that Alister MacKenzie and Bobby Jones's masterpiece has had on other tracks. Augusta is the Armani of course design, inspiring countless imitations. Here are six sterling examples of the Augusta Influence.

What happens at Augusta doesn't stay at Augusta. The par-5 13th (above) inspired the closing hole at Shadow Creek near Las Vegas.

Turn to see special section!



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The Influencer

Congressional *(Blue)*

Bethesda, Md., 18th hole, par 4

AUGUSTA INFLUENCE:
11th hole, par 4



JOHN MUMMERT/USGA

Bobby Jones once described Augusta National's risk/reward philosophy as follows: "Two things were essential. First, there must be a way around for those unwilling to attempt the carry; and second, there must be a definitive reward awaiting the man who makes it. Without the alternative route the situation is unfair. Without the reward it is meaningless." Augusta's greatest influence was moving design away from the penal school and toward the strategic. Congressional's 18th hole, redesigned by Robert Trent Jones Sr. prior to the 1964 U.S. Open, is one of the game's greatest closers, thanks to the shot values it shares with Augusta's par-4 11th. For the bold, both holes clearly delineate triumph and disaster. Yet, per Jones's maxim, there's always a way around.

Shadow Creek

North Las Vegas, Nev., 18th hole, par 5

AUGUSTA INFLUENCE:
13th hole, par 5



JOHN AND JEANNINE HENEBRY

Tom Fazio has been the consulting architect to Augusta National since the 1990s, so it's no surprise that his familiarity and fondness for Augusta's brilliant risk/reward par 5s would result in superb tributes. The best may be Shadow Creek's closer. From an elevated tee, the ambitious player gunning for the green in two will contend with a water carry on both shots via a series of three lakes separated by waterfalls. Choose the three-shot route and you still have to fly your third over water from the proper angle to a long, narrow green surrounded by grassy hills, pine trees and flowers. Sound familiar, Masters fans?





Dancing Rabbit *(Azaleas)*

Choctaw, Miss., 6th hole, par 4
AUGUSTA INFLUENCE: 13th hole, par 5

In his 1920 book *Golf Architecture*, future Augusta National co-designer Alister MacKenzie set forth 13 general design principles. Number 7 reads: "The course should have beautiful surroundings, and all the artificial features should have so natural an appearance that a stranger is unable to distinguish them from nature itself." Collaborating on Dancing Rabbit, Tom Fazio and Jerry Pate emulated MacKenzie's dictum to the letter. Springtime azaleas
form a gorgeous backdrop, and no matter what time of year you're here, the hilly layout lacks anything that could be considered forced or faux.

RUSSELL KIRK

Muirfield Village

Dublin, Ohio, 12th hole, par 3

AUGUSTA INFLUENCE:
12th hole, par 3

Alister MacKenzie and Bobby Jones both admired the ground-game options afforded by the Old Course at St. Andrews, but they weren't averse to demanding an all-carry shot, provided there was risk/reward value and an alternative for the weaker player. Although Jack Nicklaus paid homage to Scotland's Muirfield in naming his Columbus-area course, this par-3 12th is pure Augusta. When the hole is cut to the right on the slender, left-to-right diagonal green, it's tempting to try for a 2 on this 184-yard hole—longer than its forefather but still manageable. As at Augusta's 12th, however, flag-hunting demands courage and precision.



JIM MANDEVILLE/NICKLAUS DESIGNS

We-Ko-Pa *(Saguaro)*

Ft. McDowell, Ariz., 18th hole, par 4

AUGUSTA INFLUENCE: 5th hole, par 4

We-Ko-Pa co-designer Ben Crenshaw gushes about Alister MacKenzie's courses, calling them "equitable for all classes of golfers." Says Crenshaw, "The good player is forced to play all different shots, yet his courses are very fair for average golfers. His bunkers are gorgeous, and his greens have lots of character." He could just as easily be describing We-Ko-Pa. Wide fairways, multiple routes to the green, clever contours on the putting surfaces, and natural beauty link a course carved from rugged desert in 2006 with a course hewn from a commercial nursery in the 1930s.



LONNA TUCKER



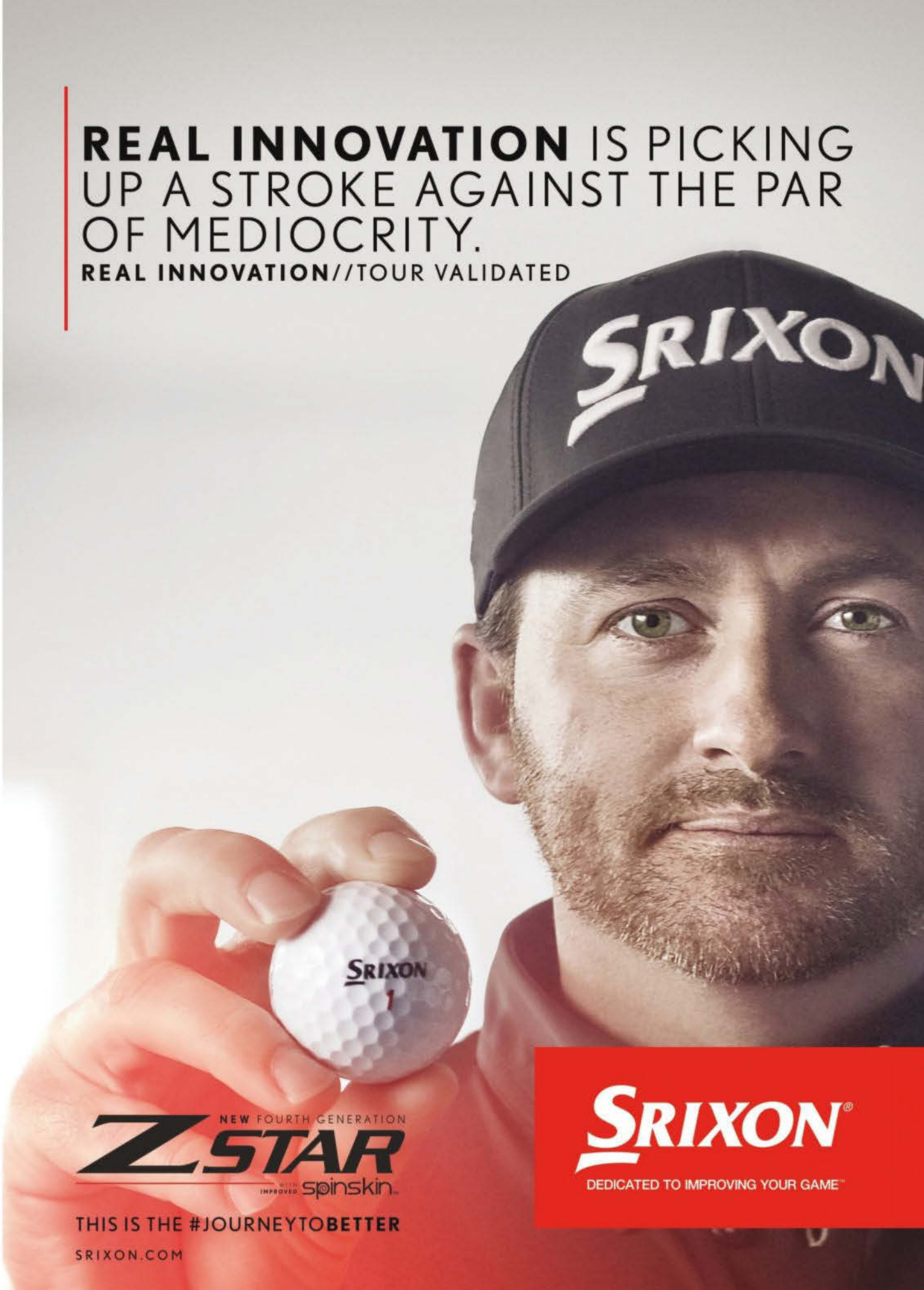
JOANN DOST

Spyglass Hill

Pebble Beach, Calif., 12th hole, par 3

AUGUSTA INFLUENCE: 16th hole, par 3

Visual and strategic drama merge harmoniously throughout Augusta National's back nine, reaching a crescendo at the par-3 16th. The hole wasn't in the original design. Robert Trent Jones Sr. created it in 1947, and the hole soon became a favorite of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who once committed it to canvas with his paintbrush. Trent Jones Sr. later authored this wooded wonder at Spyglass, where the shot demands are similar: Aim at the water-guarded left side at your peril, but bail out too far right and face a scary downhill recovery with a pond lurking beyond.


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By Michael Bamberger

Tiger on the Edge

Ten years ago, Woods won his fourth green jacket. He's been shut out at Augusta ever since. The reason might not be injury or scandal. Maybe Tiger has lost what made him a major champion: his will to win.

So this is it for Tiger Woods: the first Masters of the rest of his life—assuming he shows up at all. Even Ben Hogan, the most reclusive of the greats, continued to play Augusta until he was 54, finishing tenth in his swan song. Tiger Woods is 39 and won't stop playing the Masters anytime soon. His best chance to get a 15th major title—to say nothing of 16 and beyond—will come at Augusta, the course he knows best in the world. In the space of nine years, he won four times there: in 1997, 2001, 2002 and 2005. But since then, there have been seven Sundays where he was in position to get No. 5 and couldn't summon what he needed when he needed it. And now he makes his first trip to Augusta with the chipping yips.

You know the course. Augusta's fairway grass is about as long as Roger Staubach's hair, circa 1965. The ball just sits there, teetering on nothing, begging to be thinned or chunked. This is not going to be easy for Tiger, this first Masters of the rest of his life.

Woods is a proud man. It is his strength and his weakness. For years, he would grind out a Friday 70 or 71, when he looked like he was shooting 77, and make another cut. That was then. Now office pools are taking action on whether Tiger will play 72 holes at Augusta this year. He's never missed a cut there as a pro, and has no WDs, but lately he packs it in at the first hint of gluteus deactivation or some other medical trauma. He's not who he was. We can see it, but maybe Woods cannot. Pride can blind a person.



JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

Over the last decade, Augusta has brought Woods to his knees.

His own pride has incurred two deep wounds. In 2009, he ran over a hydrant and out oozed the tawdry secrets of his sex life for the world to see. Earlier this year, Woods bladed and fatted a series of chip shots showing the world the utter confusion under his hood. Some golf commentators have already written Tiger's professional obit, for the simple reason that no great golfer has ever shown such ineptitude before turning 40. More likely, this mess is a passing storm. Don't expect any miracles at Augusta. You'll only be setting yourself up for disappointment. If he tees it up, do expect him to play 72 holes. Last year, a score of 146 made the cut. Woods can shoot 146, even if he has to use his putter from 30 yards off the green.

At the 1996 Masters, Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus played a practice round with Woods, renowned amateur. After it, Big Jack made a proclamation so audacious he later downgraded it to a joke: "Arnold and I both agreed that you could take his Masters and my Masters and add them together and this kid should win more than that." Taken literally, Jack's math added up to a minimum of 11 green coats for Tiger. But Nicklaus was assessing talent and promise and assuming his own life's path. Now we know better: Getting a fifth would be an astounding achievement.

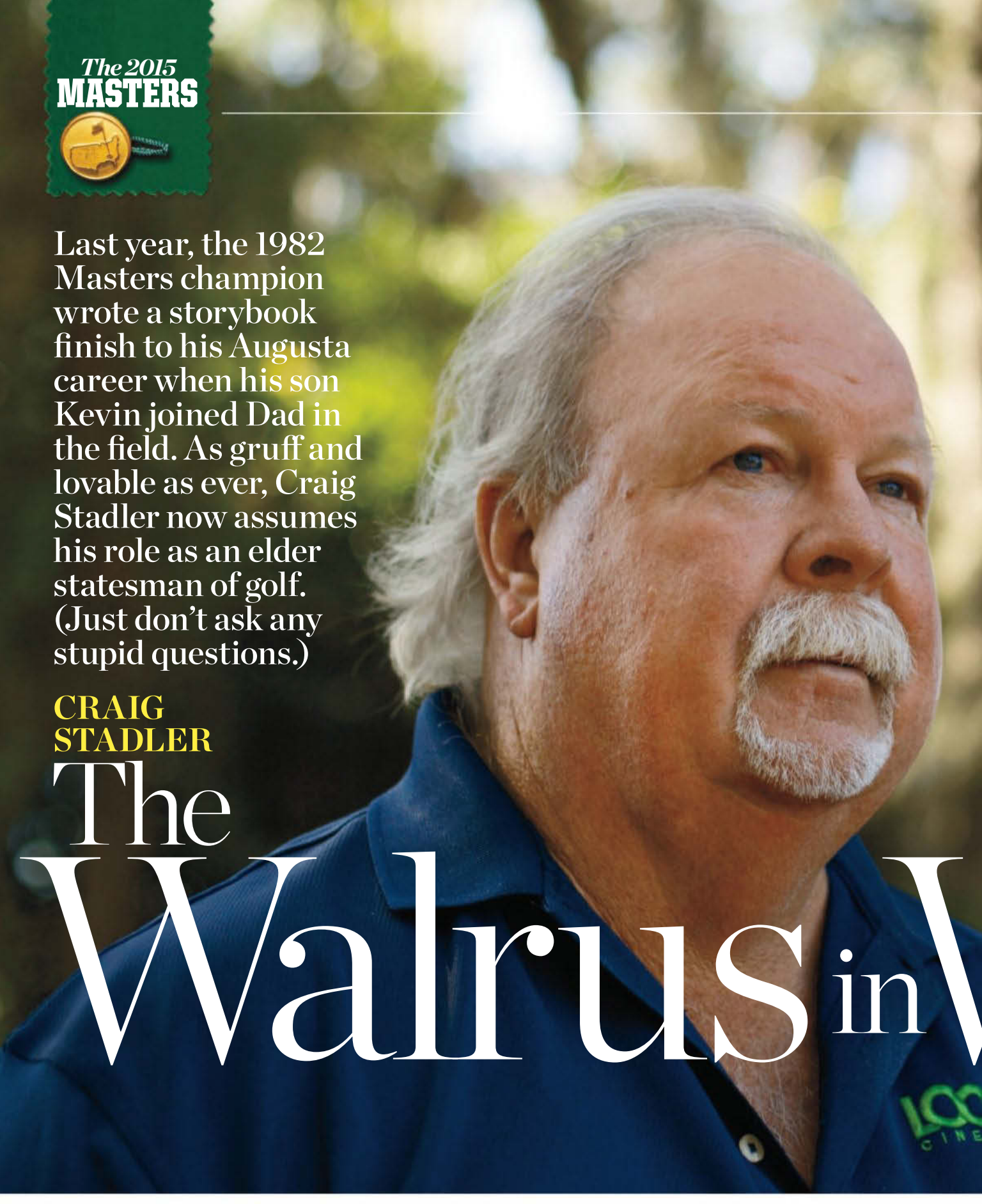
Palmer, wise in his own way, has serious doubts if Tiger will get it. In his most intimate conversations, he talks about how every golfer eventually loses "the edge," the self-belief that allows the game's elite players to practice with manic intensity and feel a sense of ownership late on Sunday. Arnold says you can't win without the edge, not the tournaments you most want. He also says that once the edge is gone you can't get it back. Post-hydrant, Tiger has won at Bay Hill (Arnold's place) and at Muirfield (Jack's). He's won at Firestone and Doral. But Tiger Woods doesn't need the edge to win in those places. Arnold is talking about the PGA, the British and U.S. Opens, the Masters especially—the ones Woods still needs "to let the legend grow."

That phrase, invented by Tiger's father, seems 100 years old, doesn't it? We won't be watching Woods at Augusta this year to see if he can grow his legend. We'll be looking to see what kind of fight is left in the man. It brings to mind one of Tiger's favorite phrases: "Baby steps."



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Last year, the 1982 Masters champion wrote a storybook finish to his Augusta career when his son Kevin joined Dad in the field. As gruff and lovable as ever, Craig Stadler now assumes his role as an elder statesman of golf. (Just don't ask any stupid questions.)

CRAIG STADLER

The Walrus in W

By Josh Sens
Portrait by Erika Larsen

A Vinter

A SEASONED CURMUDGEON AT AGE 61, Craig Stadler isn't one for sentimental pap. Yet even he was struck by the Disneyesque plot that played out last April, when his son Kevin qualified for his first Masters—and notched a top 10—to create a Lion King–like sense of closure.

For several years, Stadler pondered the end of his own days at Augusta, where he won his lone major in 1982. It had been a prosperous run: 37 appearances, five top-10 finishes, and the brightest highlight of a stellar, 13-win PGA Tour career. But the course grew longer, and his game grew shorter—as did his tolerance for missing the cut. When the younger Stadler earned his invitation, the elder Stadler declared the tournament his last Masters.

Not that he's shuffled off into the sunset. Stadler has rededicated himself, working with a new swing coach and even taking up Pilates. Rest assured that in person, he still cuts a rumpled, imposing figure. (There's a reason he's not nicknamed the Eel or the Seal.) *Golf Magazine* caught up with this Walrus in winter in the clubhouse at TPC Sawgrass to hear his unvarnished opinion on all things Augusta—where, it turns out, he keeps multiple green jackets for a very "fitting" reason.

Stadler, outside the clubhouse at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

This year, you'll be a Masters viewer for the first time since 1978. Do you have a Pavlovian response to those honeyed TV spots?

You mean the piano music and the Jim Nantz thing? "Hello, friends, and welcome to the Masters." I keep waiting for them to do that with other sports. [*In hushed announcer's voice.*] "Hello, friends. Jim Nantz here, and welcome to March Madness!"

So you're not an Augusta romantic?

Oh, I love the place. I always have, other than Thursday and Friday for the past five or six years. Last year, I had a blast watching Kevin over the weekend. He played well, and I loved every minute of it.

You and Kevin made history as the first father-and-son tandem to play in the same Masters. Was it disappointing not to get paired together?

It wasn't, really. We played a practice round together, and we played the Par 3 [tournament]. As much as it would have been cool to play with him in the big tournament, that might have been a little much for him.

Kevin finished tied for eighth last year. Do you give yourself the credit for showing him the ropes?

[*Sarcastically*] Yeah, right.

Any wisdom that you *did* pass along?

Nah. We did a press conference before the tournament, and the press kept talking about all this relationship crap. I just didn't want to get in his way. I said, "He's out here trying to win a tournament, and I'm out here trying not to embarrass myself." And that's the way I felt about it.

There's an embarrassment factor for you? Do you really think Masters fans care what you shoot?

Well, I have no interest in being part of anything where I shoot 81, 80.

When did Augusta start to get too difficult for you?

For five years or so, I'd been saying under my breath to friends that the first year Kevin got in was going to be my last. And it worked out perfectly, because he played really well. A couple of bogeys down the stretch on Sunday, but otherwise it was awesome to watch.



AP PHOTO

In 1982, Tom Watson helps the new champion don his new duds.

You also had some good early showings at Augusta, with a win and three top-10 finishes in your first nine starts.

A lot of it came down to putting. I always seemed to putt well there, but I don't know why.

In 1982, the year you won, you had a three-shot lead going into Sunday. What does it feel like to sleep on the 54-hole Masters lead?

A bunch of us were right up there on Saturday, and I made three bombs in a row on 16, 17 and 18 to get into the lead. I went to the pressroom, and I probably pissed some people off. They said, "You've got a three-shot lead. How are you going to prepare for tomorrow?" I said, "Well, I'm going to get up, have an Easter egg hunt with the kids, have a little lunch, hit balls and play." I think they thought I was being a smart-ass.

You weren't being a smart-ass?

No. It's Easter Sunday. I'm going to hide some eggs and have a hunt with the kids. What else do you do on Easter Sunday when you aren't playing golf until 2 p.m.?

"Last year, I had a blast watching Kevin over the weekend. He played well, and I loved every minute of it."

Just "playing golf"? That's what the Sunday Masters lead felt like?

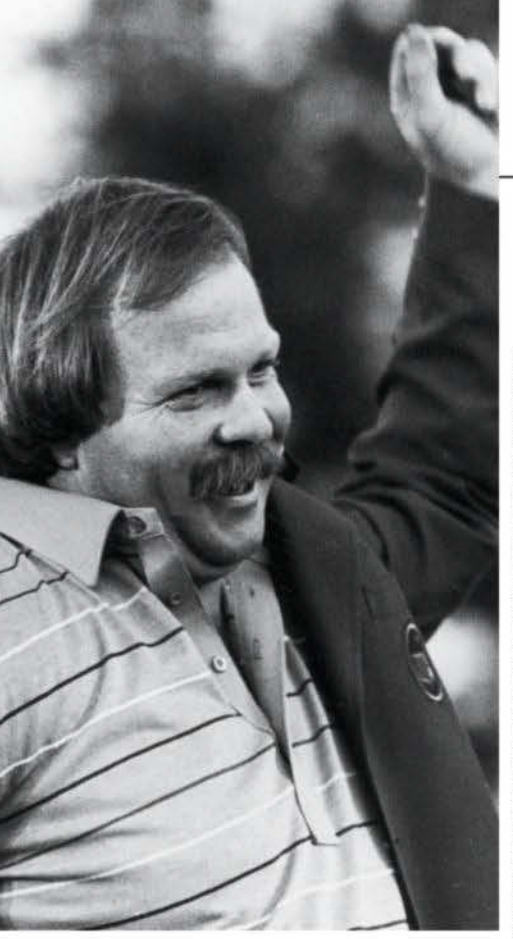
Pretty much. And I went out and shot 33 on the front nine. I had a seven-shot lead walking off the 10th green.

Is it true that at that point you started envisioning the green jacket presentation?

I don't remember much about that front side. But I remember every spot I hit it on the back. This might sound like bull----, but honestly it was the best 40 I ever shot. I hit a lot of quality shots.

So you didn't lose a seven-stroke Sunday lead because pressure got to you—it was just that you didn't score well?

When I finished on 18, they asked me if I wanted to hit balls [before the playoff]. I said, "Nah, let's go." So Dan Pohl and I went to the 10th. We both hit good drives, which is not the easiest shot for me, turning it right to left. I hit [the approach] about 30 feet short and two-putted for par. He left his approach on the right fringe, hit his first putt about eight feet short and then missed his par putt. It was one of those weird deals where I felt almost as bad for him as I did good for myself.



Maybe it's not a surprise that you remember the bad shots more than the good ones.

If I have a lousy nine and shoot 46, I could tell you how. But if I shoot 31, and you asked me about it, I'd probably say, "I don't know. I made six birdies and a bogey," or whatever.

That tee shot on 10 brings up something we hear about Augusta—that it hurts players who like to fade the ball. Do you agree?

It's tough on the tee shots, because most of the doglegs move left—2, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14. The 18th is really the only hole that goes a little right. But that fading thing, that's the Lee Trevino myth we've heard forever, that he didn't play well because he couldn't turn it over. Bull----. He could draw the ball as well as anybody.

The story is that Augusta was too stuffy for Trevino—that he didn't feel comfortable there.

Maybe. It's not my place to comment.

What about you? Is Augusta a bit uptight for your Everyman sensibility?

Not at all. I love it.



TIM DOMINICK/THE STATE/MCT/SIPA USA

Together at last: The Walrus and the Smallrus strike a pose at Augusta National last year.

Do you ever play there outside of tournament week?

For sure. I try to get there at least once a year. I've become good friends with four or five members, so it's relatively easy to do. I enjoy bringing people out there, especially people who've never played there.

Ahem...

[*Laughs*] I mean, people who know better than to ask. Last year, I took a buddy from Argentina who'd never been out of his home country. We played with Freddie [Couples]. My buddy was shaking so badly on the first hole he couldn't get the ball on the tee. I teed it up for him. He's a pretty good player, maybe a 6 handicap, but Augusta can be intimidating.

Has Augusta National become too long and difficult?

They've only really lengthened it once, but it was significant. It went from around 6,900 yards to something like 7,550 [officially, 7,435]. Eight or ten years ago, that wasn't too much for me, but it is now. The biggest thing is that the younger guys still hit the same clubs into the greens that we hit 30 years ago. Take a hole like 7, a par 4. They're hitting wedges into a green that's built for a high shot in. I can hit a good drive, and I still have 180 yards left. I'm hitting a 4-iron, so I have to be absolutely perfect or I'll bounce into the back bunker. And anytime you miss a green at Augusta, you're dead, as you should be.

Can an older player still win?

I don't know what's going on with Freddie. He plays so well during the the week and then does nothing on Sunday. Maybe he gets tired. Of the over-50 guys, I'd say [Bernhard] Langer has the best chance because he doesn't care if he's playing Naples or Quad Cities or Augusta. It's a golf tournament, and he has the same mindset for all of them. He's well-regimented. That's the German in him. But it's so much tougher to win these days. It used to be you teed off 60 or so players and maybe 15 had a chance to win. Now you're teeing off 95 or so and you've got 65 or 70 who can win.

Do you favor expanding the field?

I liked it better when it was smaller. They've probably got a few too many marginal players from overseas. They want it to be a world golf event, and it is. But when it was just 60 guys, it had that magic and mystique of getting into it. I mean, only 60 people in the whole world can play! The field is slowly creeping up to be like a regular major, which is probably as it should be, but you miss that mystique.

Are today's players better than they were in your day?

Not really. It's harder to win, but other than the way Tiger Woods did—and Rory McIlroy at times—nobody stands out like Jack Nicklaus used to, or like Johnny Miller did for a few years.

What about the complaint that young players now seem like carbon copies of one another?

They *are* all pretty robotic. They look alike to me, and they seem a little boring, at least on TV. But they almost have to take that approach with the amount of money they're playing for today.

Have you done the grumpy-old-man bit with Kevin and said, "You don't know how good you've got it, you whippersnapper"?

Oh, yeah. One of the best stories was four or five years ago, when he got into Colonial as an alternate and played really well. I was watching on TV, and he missed a putt on 18—struck it beautifully, but it →



STAN BADZ/PGA TOUR/GETTY IMAGES

Stadler reclaimed his winning ways in 2013, after a nine-year drought.

just melted over the cup. We talk on the phone that night, and he says, "That putt cost me 90 grand." I said, "*Really*? It cost you 90 grand? That's *terrible*. I feel sorry for you. Did you write them a check?"

The Walrus puts the Smallrus in his place. Who gave you that nickname, anyway?

Jerry Pate bestowed it on me at the 1975 Walker Cup at St. Andrews.

Do you like it?

It's a little late to say I don't.

When you take stock of your own career, where do you place yourself in the pantheon?

That's just not something I think about.

Well, would you say you overachieved or underachieved?

Definitely underachieved.

How so?

Golf was never my No. 1 priority. When we had kids, in 1980 and '82, my family was the focus. When I came back from the road, I'd hang out and screw around with the kids. I didn't practice. I wasn't real disciplined. Fortunately, golf came pretty easily for me. In '82, I started the year in Tucson, and my clubs got lost on the way there. I borrowed a set for the practice rounds on Monday and Tuesday, and those were the first shots I'd hit in a few months. I won by three. I could do that then. Nowadays, if I take five days off, it takes me two weeks to get it back.

Do you ever regret not having been more committed to practice or to physical fitness?

I wish we had had the [fitness] trailers back then. You had nobody to go to.

You would have pumped iron?

No, for stretching. I never lifted weights, except for 12-ounce curls.

How's your health now?

I hurt my back last year in Hawaii. We were traveling with people who bought too much crap. There was no room for my clubs in the car, so I strapped them on top with bungee cords. I drove to the airport looking like Jed Clampett. Putting my clubs up there, something in my back went. I couldn't walk. I feel better now. I started Pilates two months ago and…

Craig Stadler, doing Pilates? Sorry for laughing.

How life changes, eh? I feel way more flexible than ever.

You're 61. Have you given any thought to retirement?

I was ready to retire in 2013. I played Augusta, then went to Houston, shot 77, 74, 81 and went home. I withdrew from the Senior PGA and from the Des Moines event, thinking, "Okay, time to find something else to do." I hated playing. Then around the end of May, I figured I had to give myself one more chance. I owed it to myself. So I called Billy Harmon.

"Golf came easily. On Tour in Tucson one year, I had to borrow clubs. I hadn't played in months. I won by three."

You don't seem like a swing-guru guy.

I'd never really worked with anybody except Dick Harmon [Billy's brother]. When he passed away, I couldn't figure out what to do. Until I saw Billy.

Did he spot a swing flaw quickly?

That first day with him on the range, I hit some irons, feeling pretty pleased with my contact. Billy asks, "What club are you hitting?" I tell him 8-iron. He shoots the distance with a range finder: 125 yards.

Wow. That's a 20-handicap's 8-iron.

Billy watches me hit some balls, and he sees that my left shoulder is pointing way left, and the ball is way forward in my stance. He says, "How the hell did you get there?" I go, "Dude, I don't know! That's why I'm here to see you."

Have his swing changes helped?

A few weeks later, I played [the Champion Tour's Encompass Championship near Chicago], and I won. Has it made a difference? Yeah. Should I have gone to see him sooner? Yeah.

Now that you do Pilates and have your swing problems sorted, any chance we'll see you play Augusta one last time?

You'll see me playing this year—on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday.

If you had been a fitness buff and worked more often with a swing instructor, do you think you'd have more than one green jacket?

I'm not sure life would have been different. I've let things slip, but I was in pretty good shape when I played the regular Tour.

How much have you slipped? Does that green jacket from '82 still fit?

That's a stupid question.

We'll mark that down as a "No."

In my locker there, they actually keep two or three jackets for me. Because, you know, the weight fluctuates a bit. ■

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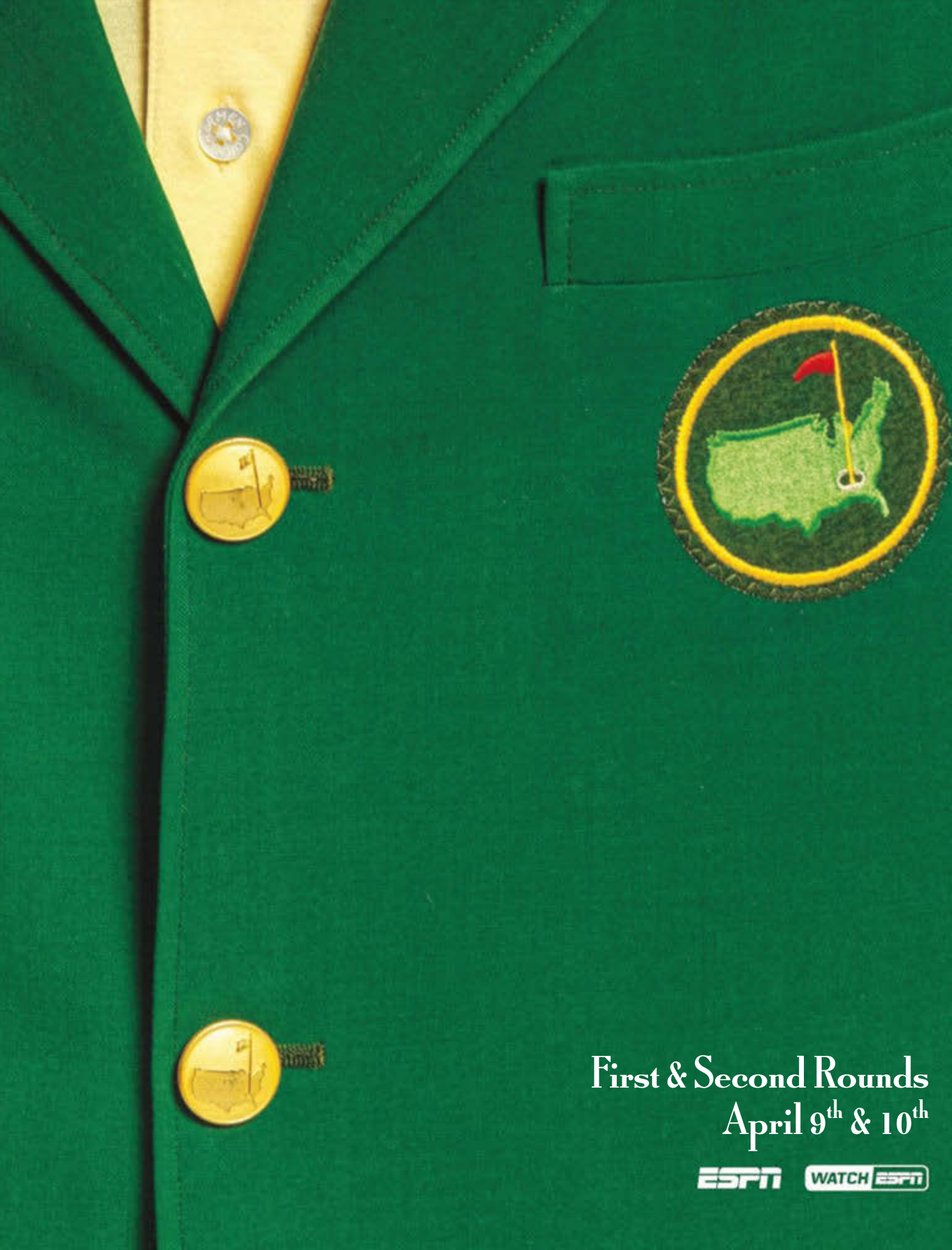

First & Second Rounds
April 9th & 10th
ESPN
WATCH ESPN

Illustration by Gary Locke



If Augusta National Ran...

Every year, the Masters produces the most polished event in golf, if not in all of sports. Which makes you wonder: What if Augusta National was also in charge of…

The Academy Awards

Red carpet sped up to 14 on the Stimpmeter; photography banned. Leggy, statuette-toting models replaced by burly Pinkerton guards, charged with enforcing new "30 seconds or less, or else" acceptance-speech policy. Host Jim Nantz returns from commercial breaks by intoning, "Hello, A-listers." "Actors" and "actresses" now referred to exclusively as "thespians." Julia Roberts wears glamorous moisture-wicking Ashworth vest. Somber "In Memoriam" montage salutes Tiger's deceased short game.

Walmart

Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Gary Player made honorary greeters. New shoppers only admitted after older ones pass on. Price rollbacks discussed, then discarded in favor of bigger stores, prompting complaints from shorter-legged customers. Complaint department staffed by burly Pinkerton guards. Prices stay the same. Electronics aisle rebranded "Magnavox Lane."

Major League Baseball

Ball boys trade uniforms for white jumpsuits. To improve quality and shrink field size, Tampa Bay Rays and Colorado Rockies disbanded. (New York Mets' past-champion exemption runs out in 2016.) Aging mascots Philly Phanatic and Wally the Green Monster forced to retire. Distance between bases expanded five feet every few years. "No running" decree causes stolen bases to plummet.

The Environmental Protection Agency

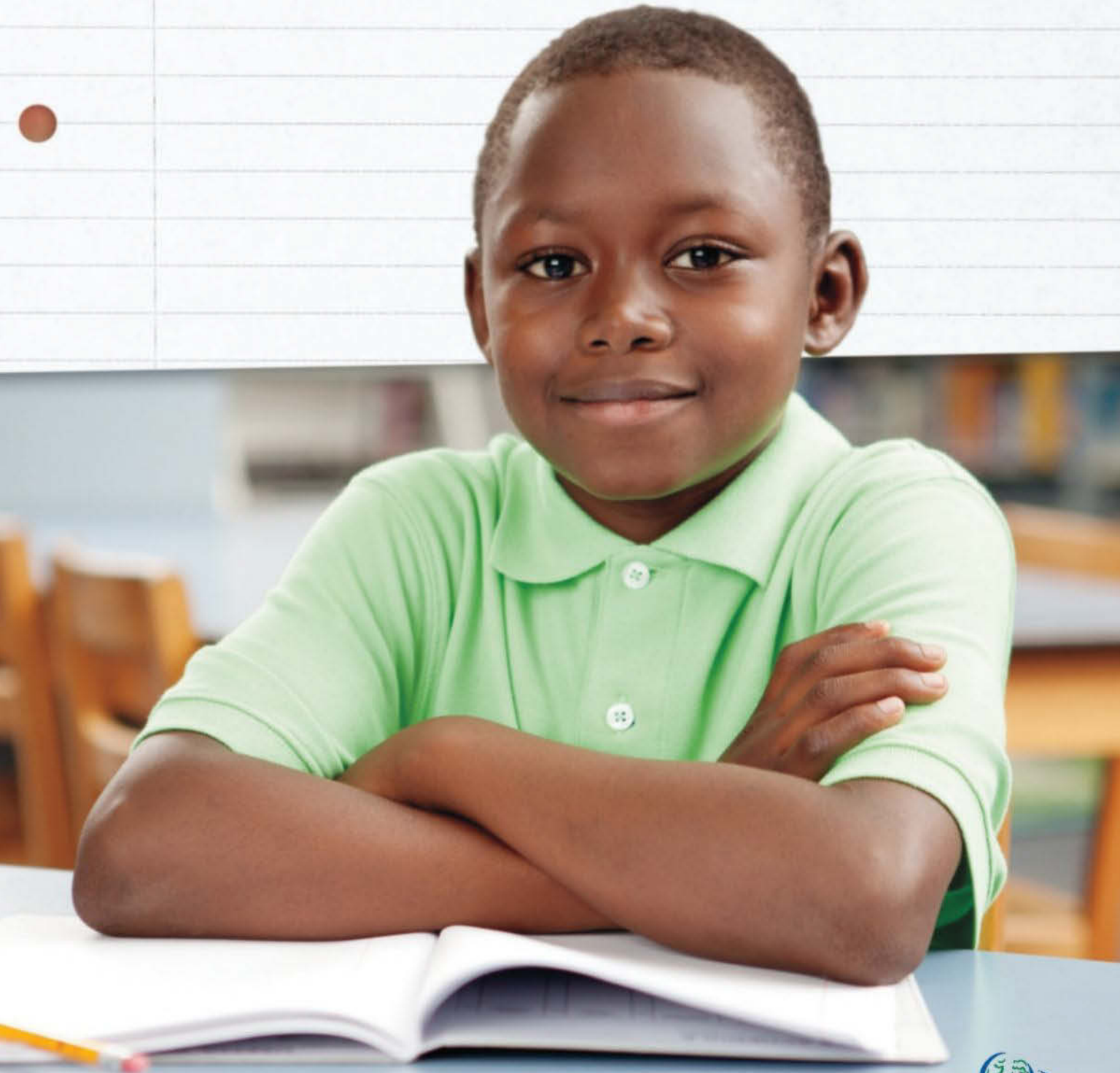
Rising sea levels battled via state-of-the-art SubAir drainage system. Beach erosian solved, as coastal sand is replaced by grains of dazzling white feldspar. Four-million-square-mile Masters umbrella installed over Lower 48 to combat global warming. (Also, "global warming" referred to as "comprehensive thaw trend.") Prerecorded audio of birdsongs piped into forests where golden-cheeked warbler population is declining.

Starbucks

Prices slashed by 75 percent across the board. Just four minutes of wait time for every hour of action at the drive-thru window. Dozing off at tables forbidden. Seattle headquarters hosts first-annual "Champions Coffee Klatch." Special "Tea-Party Play Areas" encourage more young-person interest in hot beverages. Porcelain mugs out, crystal goblets in. Gift cards replaced by gigantic novelty checks. New pimento-cheese Frappuccino an acquired taste. ■

Golf taught me:

- ☐ Responsibility
- ☐ Judgment
- ☐ Confidence
- ☑ All of the above



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Sergio's Secret

THE NEW WAY TO PURE YOUR IRONS!

The world's best iron player isn't named Adam or Rory. New research reveals that it's none other than Sergio Garcia. The Spaniard's ballstriking secret? The unique way he moves his left shoulder from address through impact. Now you can learn his simple shoulder shift to launch solid iron shots that never leave the pin.

GARCIA: ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES; INSETS: JAMES WESTMAN (4)

By TOP 100 TEACHER **BRIAN MANZELLA** (above, left) with David DeNunzio

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGUS MURRAY

In 2014, Sergio Garcia gained an average of 1.34 strokes on the field per round on approach shots alone—tops on Tour. This data comes from TaylorMade Golf research engineer James Cornish, who partnered with stats expert and *Golf Magazine* columnist Mark Broadie, the mind behind the Strokes Gained metric. Their findings numerically support what we've known for more than 15 years: Sergio *kills* his irons. As a teacher, I've studied Garcia's effortless, powerful swing but never fully understood what made it tick—until a crack team of biomechanics experts and I looked at the way he moves his left shoulder. This precise motion helps him use the ground to position his body for maximum energy production and release. I'll bet you've had teachers tell you to simply turn your left shoulder back and through. The swing is *a lot* more dynamic than that, folks.

I spent months breaking down the left-shoulder movement of Garcia—and that of other elite players—and came up with a new, easy and effective way to swing. I call it the **Pull Back, Run Up and Jump** (photos, below). In the ideal iron backswing, the left shoulder doesn't just move back, as you've been told; it moves back, down and out. On the downswing, it doesn't just move forward; it moves further down, then under and around the position it held at address. If you ignore this pattern, you rob yourself of dynamic motion and speed, which may explain why your swing often feels unathletic and weak. Enough of that! Steal Sergio's secret and start puring your irons like a pro.

THE SECRET!
Move your left shoulder back and down on your backswing, then forward and farther down, before whipping it up and behind you. Key move: Shift pressure to your right foot, then to your left.

1 "PULL BACK" FOR MORE POWER

PULL YOUR LEFT SHOULDER back and down as far from its original position as possible to produce pure power. Loading up like this gives you extra space and

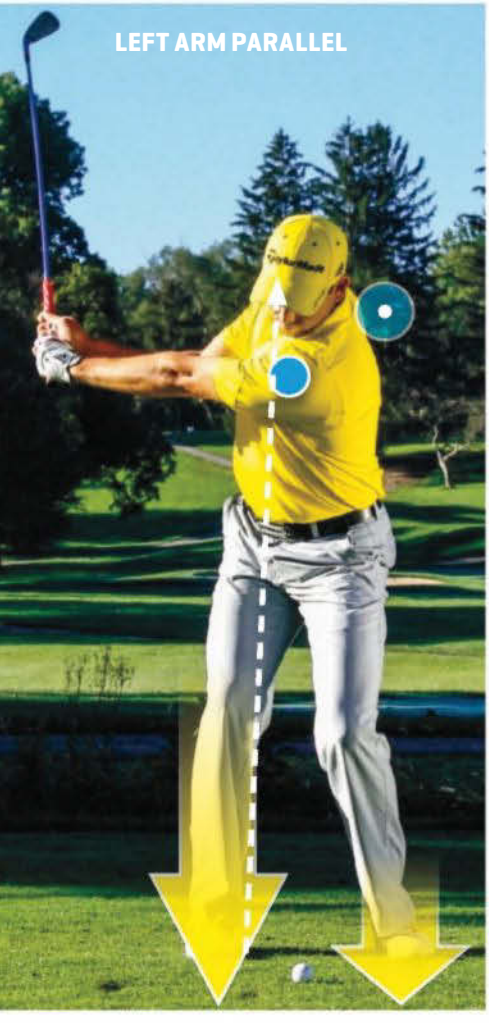




STEP 1

Just before you start your swing, shift pressure to your left foot, then use this "forward press" to shift it back to your right foot as you take the club away. Basically, you're pushing off the ground with your left foot to move your mass toward your right foot. Once you feel pressure under your right foot, use it to push upward toward your right ear (photo, above left). This upward push instantly gets your left shoulder moving back, down and out, like Sergio's.

time to generate speed on your forward-swing. A tip: Don't turn your shoulders flat or strand pressure on your left side.





STEP 2

Maintain pressure under your right foot and continue pushing upward toward your right ear, getting your left shoulder to work even further down, out and away from its original starting position. You're doing it correctly if you feel like the right side of your torso (from armpit to waist) is "elongating," and that your belly and chest are pushing away from the target at about the time your left arm reaches parallel to the ground (photo, above).

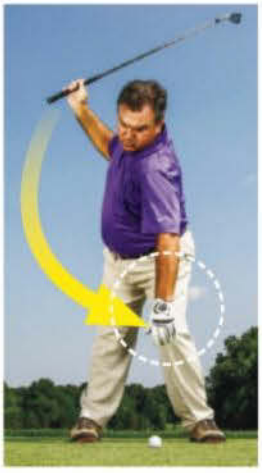
STEP 3

To end your "pull back," keep swinging your arms while you stretch your left shoulder away from the middle of your back. With your left shoulder down, out and away from its address position, it'll feel like your left ear is closer to the ground than your right, with your right foot still pressuring the ground (photo, above). You're now like a sprinter with his back foot in the blocks, ready to push off for an explosive "run up" to impact.

MANZELLA INSETS: RIGHT (3) AND OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM (5): JAMES WESTMAN

PULL-BACK TEST

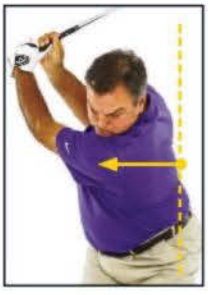
Swing to the top, then take your left hand off the grip and allow your arm to fall. Let gravity do the work. You've made a successful, Sergio-like pull back if your left hand hangs even with and slightly to the right of your left knee as you look down (photo, left). If it hangs to the left of your left knee, you didn't pull your left shoulder back far enough; if it hangs above your left knee, you didn't drop your shoulder low enough.



PULL-BACK CHECKPOINTS

LEFT SHOULDER
7 INCHES BACK

That's just past the middle of your chest when you stand in your address position. In the players we studied, most got here with 40 degrees of hip turn and 85 degrees of shoulder turn, numbers that any golfer can reach.



LEFT SHOULDER
4 INCHES DOWN

If your coach says, "Turn your left shoulder into your chin," fire him! In elite golf swings, the left shoulder drops to the approximate level of your sternum as you stand at address. Very few everyday players get this low.



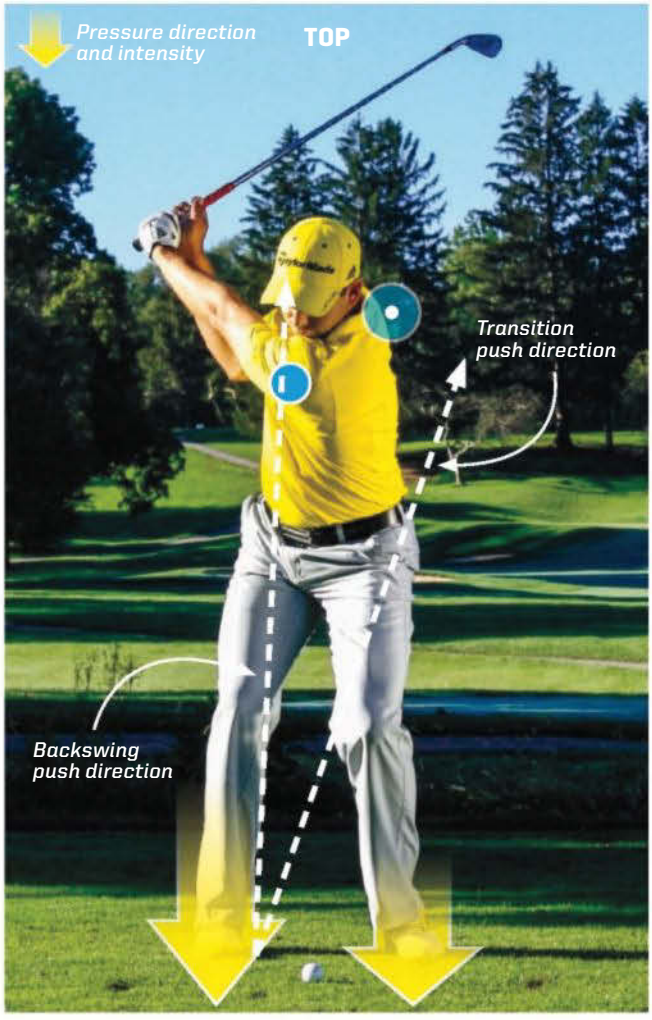
LEFT SHOULDER
5 INCHES OUT

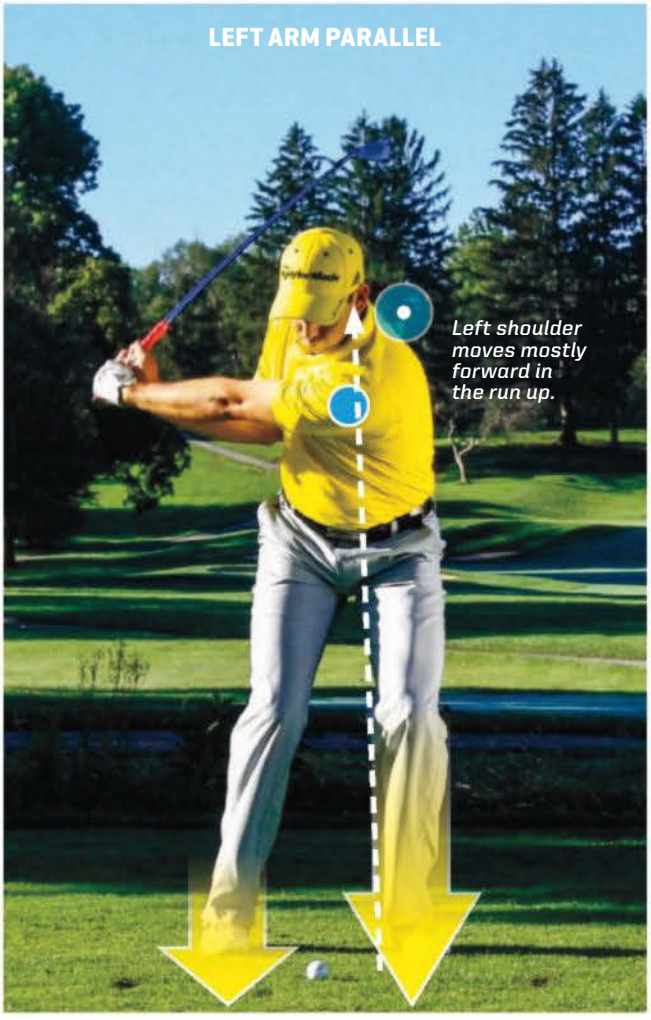
Students fight me on this position, but it's where you want to be. Prove it to yourself right now. As you sit, turn your shoulders to the right. As your right shoulder moves behind you, your left shoulder goes out in front of you.



2 "RUN UP" FOR MORE SWING SPEED

ELITE PLAYERS TRANSFER ENERGY in their backswing smoothly to their downswing without losing an ounce of stored power. They do this by "running up" to the ball with their body, not with the club and hands. The trick? Move your left shoulder forward and slightly out without unwinding your upper body too much.





STEP 1

As you move from backswing to downswing, go from pushing up toward your right ear to pushing up outside your original left shoulder position. Shifting the push direction ahead of your body's center of mass (which sits about even with your belly button when you're at the top) lets you transition smoothly and build effortless power. The trick is to push off your right foot by "twisting" it into the ground in a clockwise direction, getting your right heel closer to the target than your toes. There isn't a power hitter alive who doesn't crank his right foot in the transition. You should feel like you're an NFL running back, moving laterally from right to left and juking a defender out of his cleats.

STEP 2

The footwork in Step 1 smoothly gets your left shoulder moving toward the target and slightly down and out. This section of the swing has five times more forward left-shoulder movement than down-and-out movement, which tells you that "running up" involves little upper-body unwind. The old tip about keeping your back facing the target for as long you can? Spot on! The goal here is to save the energy you stored in your backswing—and add even more by moving in the direction of the hit—without affecting the club's movement. Notice how the angle between Sergio's left arm and the clubshaft hasn't changed in the photos above. Get this move right and you can tell your over-the-top move *adiós.*



Take this test: If you can swing your left hand back and forth without catching your left knee, your left shoulder is out enough and will give you room to freely swing through impact.

RUN-UP TEST

Start your swing and stop at the end of your run up (about when your left arm reaches parallel with the ground in the downswing). Take your left hand off the grip and let your arm fall. If you've made a Sergio-quality run up, your left hand will dangle even with and to the right of your left knee as you look down. If your left hand comes to rest above your left knee, don't sweat it. That just means you unwound your upper body too soon, losing energy in the process. Keep trying, and you'll have it down pat.

MANZELLA INSETS: RIGHT (3): JAMES WESTMAN

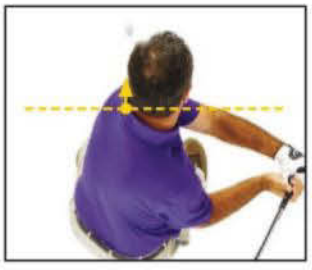
RUN-UP CHECKPOINTS



LEFT SHOULDER
5 INCHES FORWARD
This is huge! While the goal is to do as little as possible with your upper body during the run up, use just enough hip and torso turn to get your left shoulder close to the middle of your stance by the time your left arm reaches parallel with the ground.



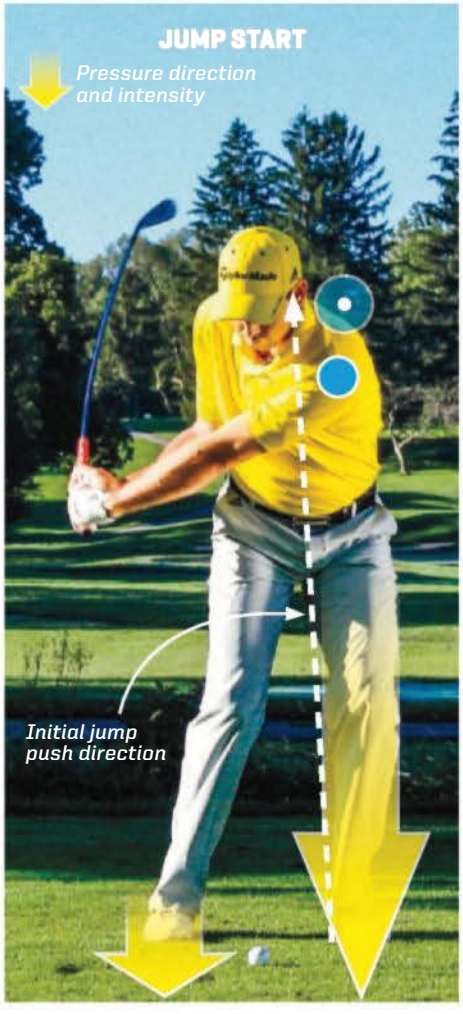
LEFT SHOULDER
1 INCH DOWN
Shifting mass toward your left foot is a lowering move—it should feel as though your whole body is "sinking" into the ground. Obviously, your left shoulder drops a bit in response.

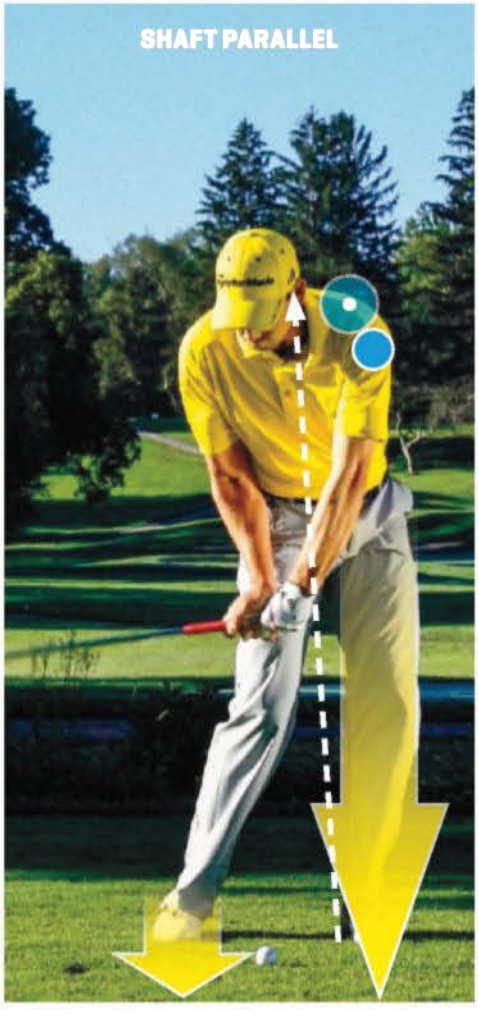


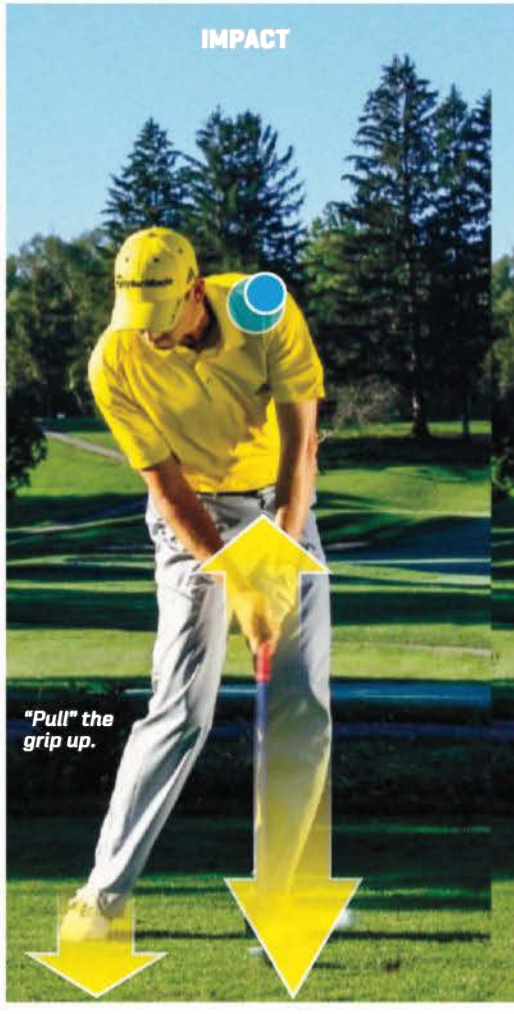
LEFT SHOULDER
1 INCH OUT
As you twist your right foot, you'll create a combination of left-to-right and rotational momentum in your shift. As a result, your left shoulder will pop out slightly away from you. If you turn too early (attention, slicers), your left shoulder will work in, not out.

3 "JUMP" FOR EXPLOSIVE IMPACT

NOW THAT YOU'VE GENERATED lots of ball-smashing energy, it's time to "jump" through impact. This phase occurs in two steps: a jump prep, and then the whipping of your left shoulder up and behind you. While the goal in your backswing was to elongate the right side of your torso, the jump portion of your new, Sergio-like swing is about elongating your left side using the pressure under your left foot as you unwind powerfully through impact.







STEP 1

To start your jump, push up from your left foot toward your left ear—the exact opposite of what you do during the pull-back phase. This will cause your left leg to straighten a bit and raise your left shoulder while tilting your spine away from the target. Important: Fight the urge to come out of your posture. Even though Sergio is pushing up in the photo above, his chest is still slightly closed and facing the ground.

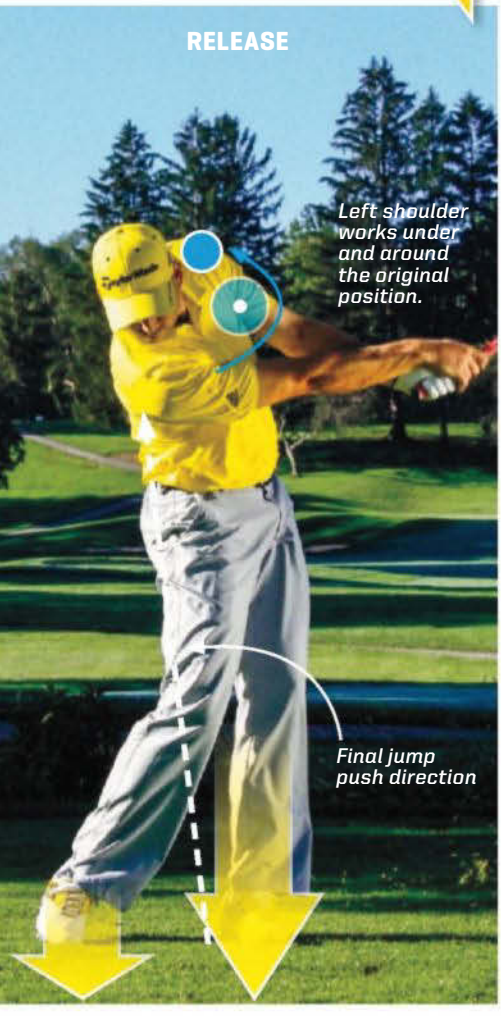
STEP 2

Just as pushing off your right foot toward your right ear helped you move your left shoulder back and down during the pull back, pushing off your left foot toward your left ear in this step helps you move the shoulder up and forward. Combined with the run up, the first phase of the jump thrusts your left shoulder two inches ahead of its starting spot. Now your swing can properly bottom out, producing ball-first contact and a Tour-pro divot.

STEP 3

Once your hands reach the middle of your right thigh, the club will be accelerating like mad, pulling on you with tons of downward force. If you don't fight it (and most weekend players don't), the momentum will pull you toward the ground and you'll hit it fat. So jump up! Continue to push up from your left foot and pull your left shoulder up and behind you. You want to feel like you're pulling the shaft right out of the clubhead at impact.

Scan this photo *to watch a video of this lesson. See p. 10.*



STEP 4

Continue to pull your left shoulder up and behind you in a circular motion. Do it hard! I tell my students to "elongate" the left side of their torso, which Sergio is doing above. And don't "jump" straight up. Through impact, change the push direction from your left ear back to your right ear. This will help you get your left shoulder up and behind you while slowing your body turn. The result? Full arm extension and a powerful, Sergio-like release.

MANZELLA (INSETS, RIGHT (3): JAMES WESTMAN

TAKE THE JUMP TEST

Without a club, swing back using a proper pull back to elongate your right side. Then swing forward, elongating your left side and getting your left shoulder up and behind you. You should feel as though you're flinging your arms down the fairway. Try it while holding a range bucket and see how far you can hurl it down the range.



JUMP CHECKPOINTS



LEFT SHOULDER NET 2 INCHES BACKWARD

After moving forward in the first part of the jump (Steps 1–2, left), your shoulder moves six inches backward as you whip through impact. This motion pulls your arms straight, eliminating your chicken-wing finish.



LEFT SHOULDER 10 INCHES UPWARD

Huge vertical movement in both sections of the jump help you elongate your left side. This movement is key; without it, the momentum of the club will pull your chest toward the ground, and you'll likely hit it fat.



LEFT SHOULDER 10 INCHES INWARD

There's a "pulling in" feel to a solid jump, removing all the outward shoulder movement in the pull-back and run-up phases. This may be a new sensation: You should feel like you're throwing your left shoulder behind your left ear.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: *Steven Nesbit, Ph.D. (Lafayette College), Young-Hoo Kwon, Ph.D. (Texas Women's University), Sasho MacKenzie, Ph.D. (St. Francis Xavier University), and Michael Duffey, Ph.D. (Penn State University).*

KPMG *presents* **LEADERS IN THE CLUBHOUSE | EXECUTIVE WOMEN + GOLF**

Molly Solomon

Executive Producer, Golf Channel

A 10-TIME EMMY AWARD WINNER and former longtime NBC Olympics producer, **Molly Solomon** now oversees production and programming on Golf Channel—the first woman to become executive producer for a national sports network. Solomon also serves on the advisory council for the KPMG Women's Leadership Summit, which will take place at the KPMG Women's PGA Championship in June and will connect accomplished women like Solomon with the coming generation of women leaders.

—interview with Evan Rothman

How did you become interested in golf? In 1993, I was assigned to be the production associate on NBC Golf, which means you do all the stats and graphics. I didn't know what par was at the time. But I love sports, and whatever I get assigned I throw myself into. A mentor of mine, Jon Miller, took me aside after the second week and said, "If you're going to work on this tour, you need to play golf." He set me up with an instructor, Cindy Reid, who was at TPC Sawgrass, for five days of intense introductory lessons. I just fell in love.

What did you learn in those first five days? What I remember from Cindy, and it's been my nemesis to this day, is that my very intense, quick personality, with a mind going a million miles an hour, doesn't translate well to golf. I had to slow everything down and get into a better tempo. That's actually been a great lesson for life. I need to pause, take a beat and slow down to get in sync.

What has golf taught you since then? It reminds me of the value of hard work. It's hard—and incredibly humbling—to learn to play golf as an adult. I'm just not very good at times. The fact that I can't conquer golf makes me that much more of an avid player. I want to go back and try harder. The perfectionist in me will just never, ever give up.

How's your game these days? It's gotten a lot better since I moved to Florida! You just can't play a very long season [living in the Northeast]. I'm an 18 handicap. I do have [11-year-old] triplets, so I don't get a lot of time to play. But I've come a long way from where I first started.

What don't viewers understand about the golf tournament telecasts they watch? There's one ball in play in the NFL, in basketball, in baseball. In golf, there might be 40 balls in play. The complexity of a golf telecast is beyond imagination—it's mind-boggling. You're watching a golf telecast and all you feel is serenity, when behind the scenes it's organized chaos. It's madness to produce—joyful madness.

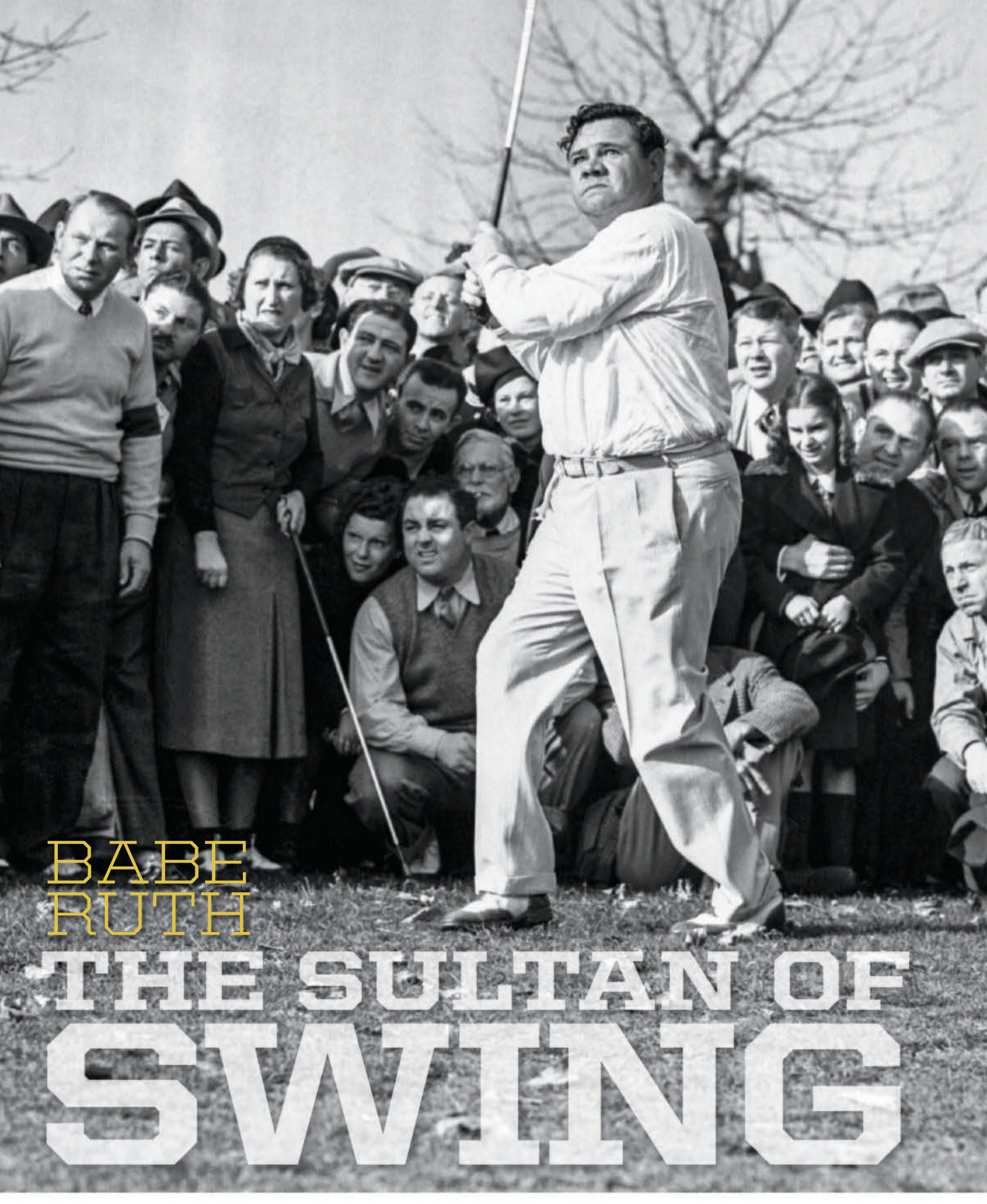
How did you get involved with the KPMG Women's Leadership Summit? Why was it important to you? I've been working closely with them as we're creating [coverage of] the championship. I've told them my story about having a really strong mentor and sponsor at NBC. We want to have an impact on the next generation of female leaders. It's vitally important. With the summit, we're not only talking to women in positions of power; we also want to empower younger women who are advancing in their careers, because there just aren't enough women in leadership roles.



Solomon took up golf in 1993 when she was a production associate. The sport has become central to her life and work.

PHOTO BY CHRIS MCKENRY. ©2015 TIME INC.


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BABE RUTH
THE SULTAN OF SWING



Ruth blasts a tee shot at a Long Island four-ball match in 1937.

BETTMANN/CORBIS

In the Roaring Twenties, America's most famous golfer wasn't Bobby Jones. It was Babe Ruth. As "Play ball!" echoes throughout the bigs again this month, we spotlight the Bambino's love for the sport that gave him joy in his prime and comfort in his dying days.

By Kevin Cook

THE SULTAN OF SWAT, THEY called him. The Big Bam, the Jovial Giant, the Colossus of Clout, the Behemoth of Bust, the Wizard of Whack. During the Roaring Twenties, when he restored America's faith in baseball after the 1919 Black Sox scandal, Babe Ruth reached a level of fame that redefined fame. He slugged more home runs than most teams hit. He hobnobbed with war heroes and movie stars who were dazzled to meet him. Crowds thronged railroad crossings just to watch his train go by. In 1923, when the New York Yankees spent a shocking $2.4 million on a new stadium, sportswriters dubbed it "the House that Ruth Built." In 1930, a reporter asked how a ballplayer could get paid more than the president of the United States. Ruth said, "I had a better year." The Babe also played some golf. →

In fact, Ruth was once the most famous golfer in America. Bobby Jones was the *best* golfer in Ruth's day—the game's superstar—but it was a minor sport then, far behind baseball, boxing, horse racing and college football in popularity. It's true that Jones drew crowds of thousands while chasing his 1930 Grand Slam, but far more often he played for galleries that would disappoint Briny Baird.

"Jones was a celebrity to golf fans, but there weren't that many of them," says Doug Vogel, a member of the Society for American Baseball Research who has spent nearly ten years researching a book about Ruth's golf game. "In contrast, Babe Ruth was the most famous athlete in the world. He played a big role in making golf a spectator sport in America—arguably, bigger than Jones."

We've grown accustomed to the sight of robust galleries at PGA Tour events. It's estimated that 50,000 spectators per day attended the men's 2014 U.S. Open at Pinehurst. A few months earlier, a record 563,008 fans turned the Phoenix Open into golf's biggest party. In the 1930s, it was Ruth who made the game look like fun, and whose passion for golf not only generated large crowds but motivated millions of average Americans who had never pictured themselves playing the rich man's sport.

Ruth was 20 when he took up the game in 1915, during his rookie year with the Boston Red Sox. The Sox trained in Hot Springs, Arkansas, a gambling-and-golf mecca where baseball players rubbed shoulders with crime lords like Al Capone and hustlers like Titanic Thompson. The six-foot-two jock whaled at the ball, sometimes snapping the shaft of his driver. He launched 300-yard drives (using wound-rubber Haskell balls, no less) as well as hooks and slices that were still rising as they sailed out of bounds. "With broken clubs and lost balls taken into account, golf is a pretty expensive pastime for Babe Ruth," quipped one news account. To his credit, he always took his penalty strokes and putted out. No gimmes for the Babe. And he improved in a hurry. Despite his image as a roly-poly powerhouse, he was a terrific athlete and light on his feet.

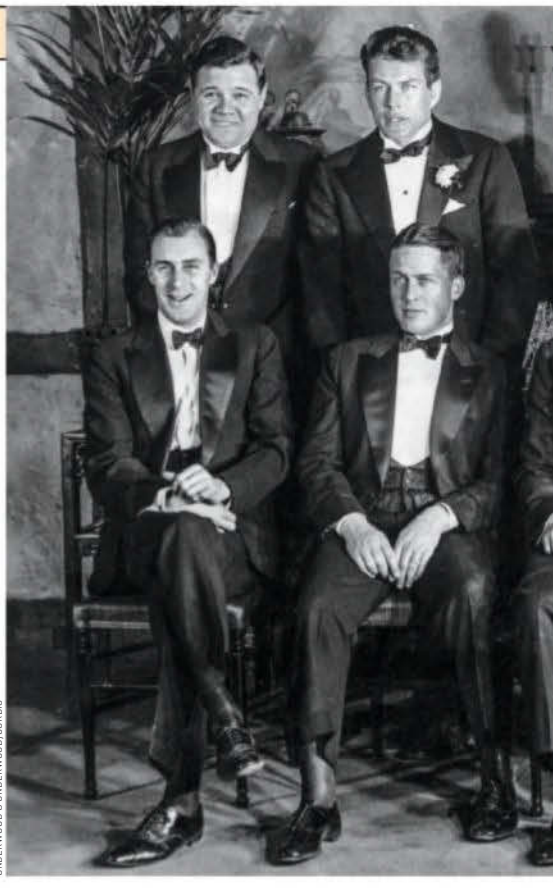
On January 5, 1920, Ruth was in Los Angeles, playing a round at Griffith Park, when news arrived that after five years with the Red Sox, the team had sold him to the Yankees for $100,000. Three months later he reported to the Yankees' training camp in Florida but skipped his first practice to play 18. He was falling under the game's spell, improving from a scattershot hundred-shooter to someone who could occasionally break 80, and discovering that this country-club diversion suited his appetites and talents. A golfer could drain a flask of whisky while playing and eat a hot dog or three between holes—what a game!

In his first year with the Yankees, the 25-year-old Ruth (who pitched for the Sox but was moved to the outfield by the Bombers) batted .376 with 54 home runs. His feats on the links were somewhat less Ruthian. "Everyone saw him as this big, jolly character, but he cared about the game, and it frustrated him," Vogel says. Once, during a radio interview, the Bambino was talking about his passion for golf when his wife, Claire, chimed in: "And I've often heard you come off the golf course saying, 'Baseball really is a great game!'"

Ruth took lessons from Alex Morrison, a golf guru to the stars who pioneered swing-sequence photos by hanging a lantern from a club swung in a darkroom. "He got better," says Vogel, "and he could play under pressure. Whenever the Babe teed it up, the papers covered it. He became a single-digit handicapper, but his putting held him back. I discovered one scorecard with a 69—I think it's the only time he broke 70."

By the 1930s, the late years of his baseball career, he played almost daily with Sammy Byrd, a substitute outfielder known as "Babe Ruth's legs." Ruth was heavy and gouty by then; Byrd would pinch-run for him. More important to the Babe, Byrd was probably the best golfer ever to play major league baseball. After eight years with the Yankees and Reds, Byrd joined the PGA Tour and won six times. He finished third in the 1941 Masters, fourth in the 1942 Masters, and lost the 1945 PGA Championship in a match-play final against Byron Nelson. During his baseball days he tutored Ruth on the golf course, but it was the Babe who gave Byrd a practice tip golfers still use. During batting practice one day, Ruth tucked a hand towel in his armpit to keep his front elbow close to his chest. Byrd tried the trick, passed it on, and golfers have tucked towels on the driving range ever since.

In 1934, the year of his last full season as a ballplayer, Ruth announced his desire to



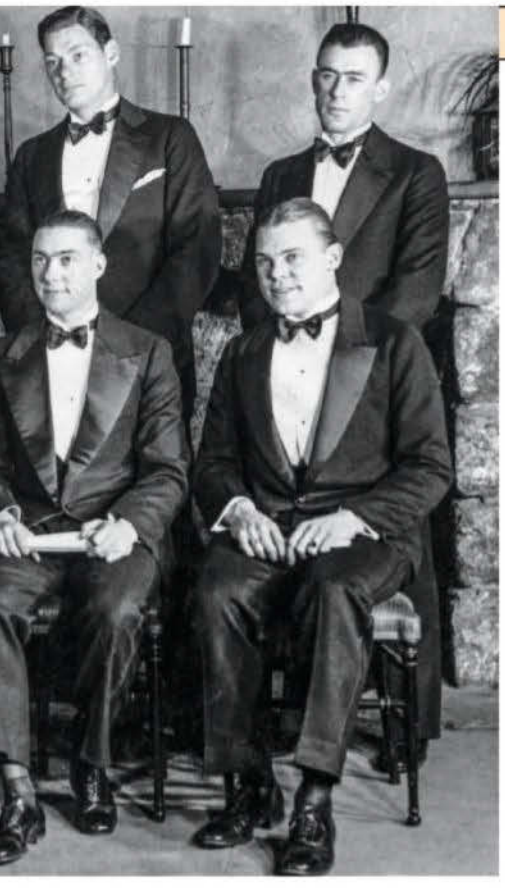
UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD/CORBIS

Ruth (top row, far left) rubbed shoulders with the great athletes of his day, including boxer Gene Tunney (to Babe's left), swimming champ Johnny Weissmuller (top row, second from right), tennis star Bill Tilden (bottom, far left) and Bobby Jones (to Tilden's left).



AP PHOTO

In 1941, Ruth staged a golf exhibition with fellow baseball legend Ty Cobb. The Babe drew a bemused look for this pat on Cobb's head.



Below: Ruth razzes Demaret at a 1940 charity match as Tunney, Sarazen and Fred Waring's swing band look on.



AP PHOTO

manage the Yankees. Owner Jacob Ruppert promised the aging icon the job but was just stringing him along, hoping to keep the greatest Yankee loyal to the franchise. In private, Ruppert asked cronies, "How could Ruth manage a team when he can't manage himself?" The Babe's reputation as baseball's Falstaff stuck, despite the fact that he was now a family man, happily ensconced in an Upper West Side apartment with Claire and their two daughters. "I don't think Mr. Ruppert realizes I have matured," he fumed to reporters. "I'm a grown man, not the playboy I was in 1919." Still, he was snubbed again and again. After his retirement in 1935, he'd play 36 holes in New Jersey, then hurry home and ask, "Did the phone ring?" His wife knew what he meant: Did anyone call about a baseball job? She hated telling him no.

"It's hell to get older," the Babe said.

Seventy-nine years later, in 2014, I found Julia Ruth Stevens sitting in a quiet, comfortable house in Henderson, Nevada. "Daddy was dying to manage a ball team," she said. Now 98 and legally blind, Ruth's surviving daughter can still see "how his face fell when Mother gave him bad news. He was so hurt not to be managing. But he still had his golf. When it got too cold to play in New York and New Jersey, we'd pick up and go to Florida."

Ruth was never far from his next tee time, once saying, "I played 365 rounds last year. Thank God for whoever invented golf."

As Ruth told a New York reporter in the late 1930s, "I played 365 rounds last year. Thank God for whoever invented golf."

In 1939, the 44-year-old Ruth represented Long Island against teams from New Jersey and Westchester County in the annual Stoddard Cup. "This was serious golf," Vogel says. "The club champions on his side usually carried him because they were good sticks and he was, well, Babe Ruth." With nine holes to play, Ruth's squad looked beaten. "Then he reeled off the best nine holes of his life," Vogel says. "At his best, if his putter was working, he was a scratch player. That day, when it counted, he was better." The next morning's *New York Times* carried a six-column headline: Babe Ruth's Double Victory Helps Long Island Capture Golf Trophy.

Babe's golf exploits sometimes drew more attention than he wanted. A year after his Stoddard Cup heroics, Ruth played New Jersey's Pine Valley for the first time. New York newsmen flocked to the course, and Ruth bet them five dollars apiece that he'd break 90. He shot 85. That evening, celebrating his victory, he called Pine Valley "a pushover" and offered the writers double or nothing. "I'll break 85 tomorrow," he said. "Who wants some of that?" Eleven writers anted up, along with a pair of Pine Valley waiters. The next day Ruth was whistling while he swung, looking like a million bucks, when he hooked a shot into the trees on the long, uphill 15th. Several swats sent his ball in several directions. When a playing partner asked if he needed a line to the green, he said, "Hell, I don't need to know where the green is. Where's the golf course?" Ten →

minutes later, putting out for a 12, he had no chance to break 90. He paid off his bets and bought drinks for the house.

"Daddy thought it was funny—the way one bad hole ruined his day," his daughter Julia recalls. "In baseball, he could strike out and still win the game his next time up." Ruth liked to say that the main thing in golf was to hit the ball to center field.

In 1941 Ruth staged a headline-grabbing charity event with fellow baseball legend Ty Cobb. Rather than flip a tee for first-tee honors, the old rivals grabbed a driver and played hand-over-hand like sandlot players. Ruth gave the fiery-eyed Cobb a pat on his bald head and got a slightly bemused look for it. Cobb, a fierce competitor and a better putter than the Babe, won two rounds out of three in what he called "the Ruth Cup," and the victory meant so much to him that he put the trophy over his fireplace.

Another charity match from around that time pitted Ruth and Masters champion Jimmy Demaret against Gene Sarazen and former heavyweight champ Gene Tunney. Sarazen, who mocked the decorous hush that hung over the game, had a kindred spirit in the boisterous Babe. That day, with a festive gallery shouting huzzahs at Connecticut's Shorehaven Golf Club, Fred Waring and his band blasted swing tunes while the golfers swung. At one point Ruth backed off a putt. He turned to the crowd, cupped his hand around his ear and said, "C'mon, let's hear it!"

"With Waring's noisiest musicians tooting and trumpeting, with 5,000 spectators chattering, cheering and rattling the putter," *Time* magazine reported, "Demaret and Ruth defeated Sarazen and Tunney, 2 & 1. The gallery voted it more fun than a circus." Yet the circus at Shorehaven was practically a church social compared with a Ruthian match that might have been the wildest round ever played.

It happened at Fresh Meadow Country Club on Long Island. The showdown featured the hustler and trick-shot artist Laverne Moore—a.k.a. the Mysterious Montague—and the world's leading Babes, Ruth and Didrikson. (Mildred Didrikson, 16 years younger, claimed she got her nickname by swatting five Ruthian homers in a girlhood baseball game.) The portly Mysterious Montague was known for shooting par or better using a baseball bat, a rake and a shovel. In November 1937 he and a top amateur, Sylvia Annenberg, took on Ruth and Didrikson in what the event's sponsor, the *New York Journal-American*, billed as the ultimate golf exhibition.



Ruth kisses another Babe (Didrikson) in 1948, a few months before his death.

BETTMANN/CORBIS

The Babe never got his wish to manage a big-league team. "Baseball broke his heart, but golf kept him going," his daughter says.

Ruth made his way to the club in high style. Returning from a hunting trip in Canada, he rolled off an ocean liner in his Stutz Bearcat touring car with three deer carcasses strapped to the fenders and another trophy, a 250-pound black bear, slumped in the passenger seat. At the course he waded through one of the biggest, rowdiest crowds in early golf history. Promoters, hoping for a record crowd, printed 6,000 tickets. That morning they collected every single one, then opened the gates to thousands more. One estimate put attendance at 12,000. Leigh Montville, who wrote a book about Ruth and another about Montague, pictured "10,000 people, 12,000 people, nobody was sure how many thousand people." The *New York Times* likened the throng to the one at Bobby Jones's Slam-clinching U.S. Amateur at Merion in 1930, "except at Merion there was a semblance of order, whereas here there was none." Jones's crowd was a golf crowd; here, as the sponsoring *Journal-American* reported, "Sixty percent of those present didn't know a bunker from a bung-hole."

The mob thronged the fairways, forcing the golfers to drive through an alley some five yards wide. Montague surprised Ruth by outdriving him, and surprised a fan with a drive that struck the bill of the man's hat and sent the hat spinning. The ball still carried 200 yards.

"This is worse than any World Series," Ruth said. "At least at the ballpark, the crowd has to stay in the stands."

Spectators danced on the greens. They pocketed approach shots. On the sixth hole, they knocked Ruth off his feet. Didrikson, surrounded by gallery members, ducked her shoulder and powered through them like a running back.

After the two Babes and Montague hit the green on a par 3, the mob forgot all about Sylvia Annenberg. Perched on the tee, seeing a green encircled by fans standing six deep, she lofted a fairway wood over the jostling crowd. The ball hopped and stopped an inch from the cup. It was the shot of the day and one of the last. Fearing a melee, the promoters declared the match over after nine holes. They had no choice. Among other indignities, a kilt-wearing referee felt a sudden breeze between his knees when the mob swiped his tartan. →



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AP PHOTO

Before Arnie had his Army, Babe (in 1938) drew big crowds.

There could be no definitive accounting of the match, not with purloined balls and kilts and further fan interference. As Babe Didrikson said, "I don't mind sugar daddies in their proper place, but I hope I don't ever have to play chip shots again while sitting on their knees." The *Journal-American* called it a 2-up victory for the Babes, who swore they'd never do anything like that again without bodyguards.

They say that every life story has a downbeat ending: The hero dies. For Ruth, the ending came quickly.

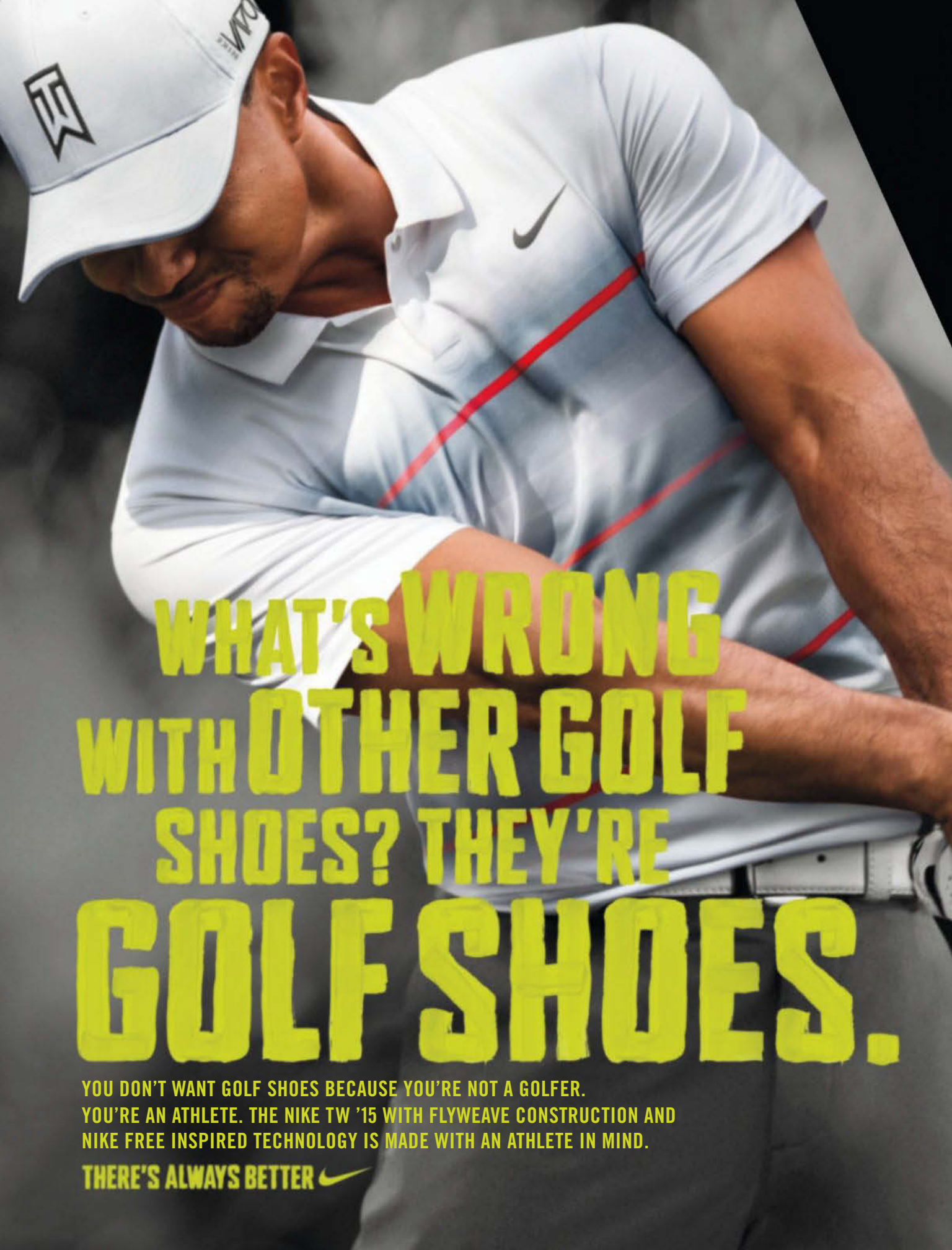
Later in life he gave up any hope of managing a baseball team. "Baseball broke his heart, but golf kept him going," his daughter says, remembering how he used to wake her at dawn, cook breakfast for both of them—fried baloney-and-egg sandwiches—and then head to St. Alban's Country Club in Queens. He would stop at a butcher shop on the way, buy the butcher's best steak, toss the steak to the chef at the club and enjoy a few drinks while the chef grilled it for him. He'd down two or three scotches with his pre-round lunch, and a couple more at the turn, and still break 80 (or at least 90), which called for another round of drinks. Babe Ruth was invincible, invulnerable, until he wasn't. In the mid-1940s he began to feel aches in his face, neck and larynx. Nobody told him he had cancer—the word was taboo—but he knew. "The termites have got me," he said.

He teed up a drive at St. Albans in 1948. He was 53. He swung hard and caught the ball between the screws. It flew high and true, only to land less than 100 yards away. The Babe stood on the tee and wept.

"The greatest figure the world of sport has ever known has passed from the field," Grantland Rice wrote a few months later. "Game called on account of darkness. Babe Ruth is dead."

But not forgotten. "Sixty-some years after his death, he's still one of the most famous names in sports," Vogel says. "What bothers me is that hardly anybody knows what he did for golf. We're talking about the man who pioneered celebrity golf. The first famous left-handed golfer. Babe Ruth played a major role in popularizing the game in America. Of course, so did Bing Crosby, George H. W. Bush, Dwight Eisenhower, Bob Hope, Dan Jenkins and Dinah Shore. The difference is, they're all in the World Golf Hall of Fame. Why isn't he?"

Good question. ■


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CLUB TEST 2015

IRONS

Edited by
Rob Sauerhaft
Reviews by Michael Chwasky,
Mark Dee and
Brendan Mohler

30 New Models Tested & Rated



A gleaming new driver impresses your pals, but the right irons—the workhorses of any golf bag—can shrink your handicap fast. Luckily, manufacturers continue to find ways to boost ball speed, improve ballstriking consistency and—above all—make the game easier and more fun. Which models rise above the rest? To find out, 40 experienced ClubTesters tried out 30 models during two weeks at World Golf Village in St. Augustine, Fla.

To help you find your perfect set, we grouped irons according to skill level: Better Player, Game Improvement and Maximum Game Improvement. Our research partner, Hot Stix Golf, fit each tester with the proper shaft flex and lie angle, then used launch monitors to record data on thousands of shots. Testers also played the clubs on course for a real-world read on what works best.

ClubTest 2015 also comes alive in tablet form, where you can see 360-degree views of each model and watch exclusive videos with our test panel. Now let's find you a new set of sticks!

Better-Player Irons p. 142

Game-Improvement Irons p. 136

Max Game-Improvement Irons p. 148

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–Hoai Hoang, Handicap 14, Age 40

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We Tested: 4-PW with True Temper DG Pro steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Easy to control trajectory–naturally a high-flier, but knockdowns are no problem; crisp leading edge chews through turf with a clean divot; manages most trouble, including rough and sand.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Dead-on accurate when you dial in, with well-struck shots tracking the pin from the moment of impact; enough forgiveness to help small misses rebound toward the line.

Distance Control: On the longer side, if you get hold of it; with square contact, some guys hit the back of the green; the J15 DPF is quite precise for a game-improvement iron–you can add or subtract yardage at will; scoring shots land like lawn darts and set up a lot of birdie looks.

Feel: Dynamic, informative and (occasionally) intense feedback; forged head delivers more nuance than most of its peers, with an impact feel rich enough to keep testers coming back for more; sweet balance smooths out swing flaws and begs to be hit.

Look: A well-executed blend of styles; like a stretched-out blade: minimal offset with a slender topline, but long from heel to toe; accommodating size instills confidence, but it's lithe enough to let you set up for the shot you want to play.

CONS

Not for the faint of heart (or high of handicap)–it won't come to your rescue like a typical game-improvement iron; elongated blades bother a few testers–can feel clumsy around the greens and twist through the rough; frank feedback, so prepare for some stingers.

BOTTOM LINE: ***One of the top irons in its class. Sleek and sneaky long, the J15 DPF is a do-it-all iron for the player with a well-honed swing who's looking for additional height and slightly more help than he'd get from a better-player stick.***

COURTESY BRIDGESTONE

CALLAWAY XR

$800, steel; **$900,** graphite; golf.com/callaway

We Tested: 3-PW with Project X SD graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: Almost preprogrammed to go high and straight, with easy altitude throughout the set; no issues in the rough; a few guys could work the ball, but overall maneuverability is limited–responds best to the simple orders "Grip" and "Rip."

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Standout forgiveness for a game-improvement club–for a lot of panelists, at or near the head of its class; an effortless iron with tons of help across the entire face; some of the most user-friendly long irons around–has several testers rethinking the hybrids in their bag.

Distance Control: An out-and-out mauler; eye-opening length–for many testers, the XR iron plays at least half a club beyond what they're currently carrying; a few guys say that misses with the XR fly farther than many irons' good shots.

Feel: Easy on the joints–a lightweight, shock absorber of an iron; good stability through the ball; a couple of testers put their egos aside and praised the responsiveness of the graphite Project X shaft.

Look: Classic Callaway setup has its fans; an everyman's iron, offset and midsize; burly topline that masks a ton of tech underneath; a comforting club to look down at with your match on the line.

CONS

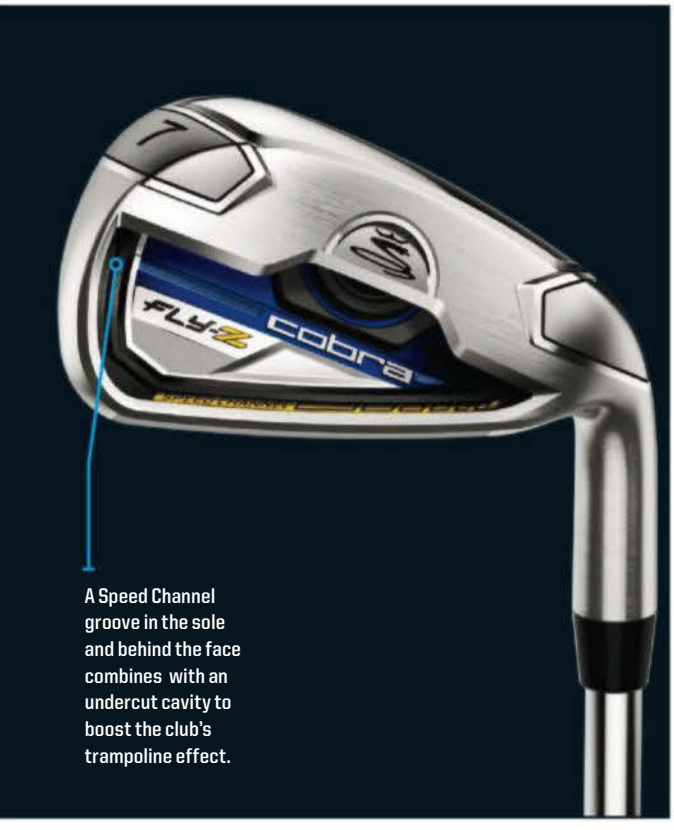
As tested, best suited for smooth, even swings–guys with fast moves or quick tempos reported loose results with some directional misses; for several panelists, it's tough to feel the club during the swing, and there's not enough differentiation at impact between center hits and misses; the large, hot-faced head isn't beloved by all on greenside shots.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The XR iron provides outstanding length and forgiveness. The graphite-shafted option is a good choice for more rhythmic swingers stepping up in class from a max game-improvement or hybrid-iron set–just keep your demands simple and let the club do the heavy lifting.***



MICHAEL CHINI

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.



A Speed Channel groove in the sole and behind the face combines with an undercut cavity to boost the club's trampoline effect.

COURTESY COBRA

COBRA FLY-Z

$700-$800, steel; **$900,** graphite; golf.com/cobra

We Tested: 4-GW with KBS CPI-1005 steel shaft and 6-GW with Matrix graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: Elevates shots out of heavy lies—just gouge and go; many testers find the Fly-Z iron to be relatively agile, but it ultimately favors function over finesse; expect quick-launching shots that don't require lots of marching orders.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: A very cordial club, hard not to hit well; these straight-shooters resist curvature and keep the ball in a tight corridor; long irons are just about as forgiving as any hybrid.

Distance Control: The longer irons pack a wallop, with a high trajectory and low spin; in general, so-so swings produce close to the same distance as great ones do.

Feel: The Fly-Z iron is easy to get moving and stable through the swing, with a nice, weighty balance that slower swingers might enjoy; hammers through the ground without telling you much about how it met the ball.

Look: The Fly-Z has a high-tech, almost mechanical appearance; some guys sense that all the gear tricks known to man are on the head; generous size skews closer to the max game-improvement category, with lots of mass low and away from the face.

CONS

The hot face costs a few panelists a bit of consistency on scoring shots; some guys prefer something smaller, slimmer and simpler.

BOTTOM LINE: *The Fly-Z iron falls on the friendlier end of the game-improvement spectrum. Mid- and higher-handicappers looking for top-notch forgiveness would benefit here.*

MIZUNO JPX-850 FORGED

$1,000, steel; golf.com/mizuno

We Tested: 4-GW with True Temper XP 115 steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Probably the most versatile iron in the test; a high, piercing flight that most panelists can tweak up or down at will; more maneuverable than its burlier peers; leading edge carves out a nice divot from nearly any lie and can also rip through rough and manhandle bunkers.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: More lenient than your typical better-player iron, more precise than its fellow game-improvement clubs; good support on toe contact and thin shots; corrects heel-toe misses—holds its line with commendable integrity.

Distance Control: Honest distance that keeps up with the best irons tested; no unwelcome surprises—clean on knockdowns and three-quarter shots; plenty of spin to hold greens; the JPX-850 Forged responds well at high speeds.

Feel: Lives up to the Mizuno lineage; resonant smack at impact—blasts through the ball with full, fluid feedback; some say crisper than previous iterations, but soft enough to make touch shots a snap; short irons bite into the ball.

Look: Clean, concise and agile, an ideal balance between sleek and powerful; a thinner topline with less offset than most but weight in all the right places to boost confidence.

CONS

Requires a repeatable swing, since it swaps some ease-of-use for workability; could be the boron added to the mix, but a few guys say it feels harder than its predecessor; too small for testers who like to lean on an idiot-proof club.

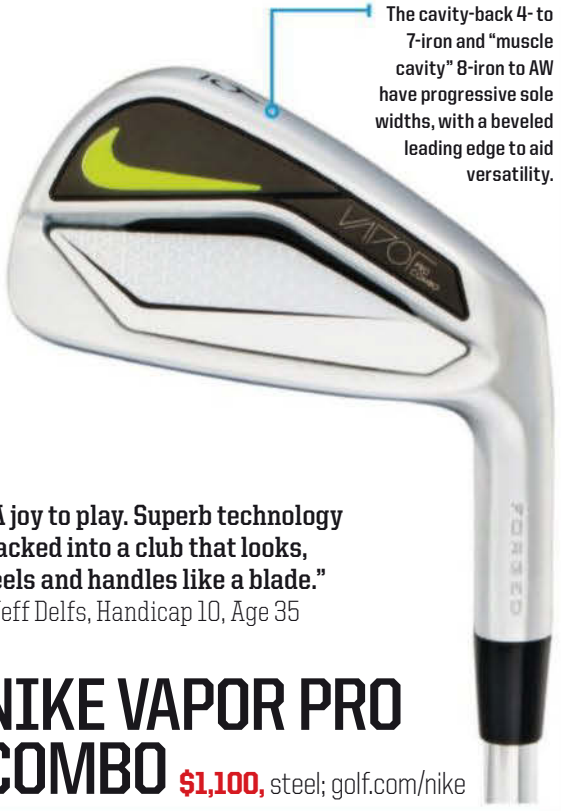
BOTTOM LINE: *The consensus favorite in our test. It walks the line between game-improvement and better-player irons with remarkably few compromises.*



Boron, which is lighter and 30 percent stronger than carbon steel, contributes to a thinner, livelier face.

"Deadly accuracy and exceptional feel in the same package—where do I sign?"
—Jon Kotraba, Handicap 9, Age 49

MICHAEL CHINI



The cavity-back 4- to 7-iron and "muscle cavity" 8-iron to AW have progressive sole widths, with a beveled leading edge to aid versatility.

"A joy to play. Superb technology packed into a club that looks, feels and handles like a blade."
–Jeff Delfs, Handicap 10, Age 35

NIKE VAPOR PRO COMBO

$1,100, steel; golf.com/nike

We Tested: 4-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shaft

PROS

Playability: A major strength; fires off high-flying short irons and driving darts from long range; a cooperative club that accommodates attempts to tweak trajectory or shot shape; clubhead carves through all kinds of turf, thick and thin.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Designed with the accomplished ballstriker in mind–you get what you put in, nothing more; laser-guided short irons with pin-seeking precision on pure swings.

Distance Control: The emphasis is truly on "control" here; finely tuned–it's easy to dial in exact numbers; takes some pace to get going, but responds well to fast swings; surgical around the greens–grooves really grab the ball.

Feel: The club's strongest attribute; a condensed sweet spot that caters to players who want to know how they hit it; weighty and well balanced; stable enough to stand up to tough lies but nimble enough for finesse plays; responsive face with instructive feedback.

Look: Doesn't get much better than this one; sleek, simple and small–a combo set that blends together seamlessly; basically blades from the top down, with minimal offset and an easy-to-align face; looking at these beauties over the ball makes it worth the extra practice you'll need to put them in play.

CONS

It can be too much club for testers who don't bring their A-game–cavity backs don't do enough to aid forgiveness; not a bomber on center strikes; several guys say the green accents deface an otherwise beautiful club.

BOTTOM LINE: ***One of our testers' favorites, even if most guys would need to log lots of range time to realize the Pro Combo's shotmaking potential. Best left to stronger players, it looks and acts a bit like a blade. Swing well and it'll sing to you.***

MICHAEL CHINI

PING G30

$800, steel; **$900,** graphite; golf.com/ping

We Tested: 4-PW with CFS Distance steel shaft and 4-PW with TFC 419i graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: Defaults to a high and straight ball flight, but knockdowns aren't much trouble; more versatile than many expect–mows through rough, hits cleanly from sand, and bails you out of trouble like your cool older brother.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: One of the most user-friendly irons in its class; incredible forgiveness that makes you better than you are; thin shots travel almost as far as those hit with square contact, and the sole makes chunks nearly impossible; mediocre swings can end up on the green, while good moves end up scaring the pin.

Distance Control: A true "let the club do the work" iron; easy distance without much effort–a handful of testers figure the G30 plays half a club longer than their current sticks; shots land softly and stay put; consistency is king, even with the long irons.

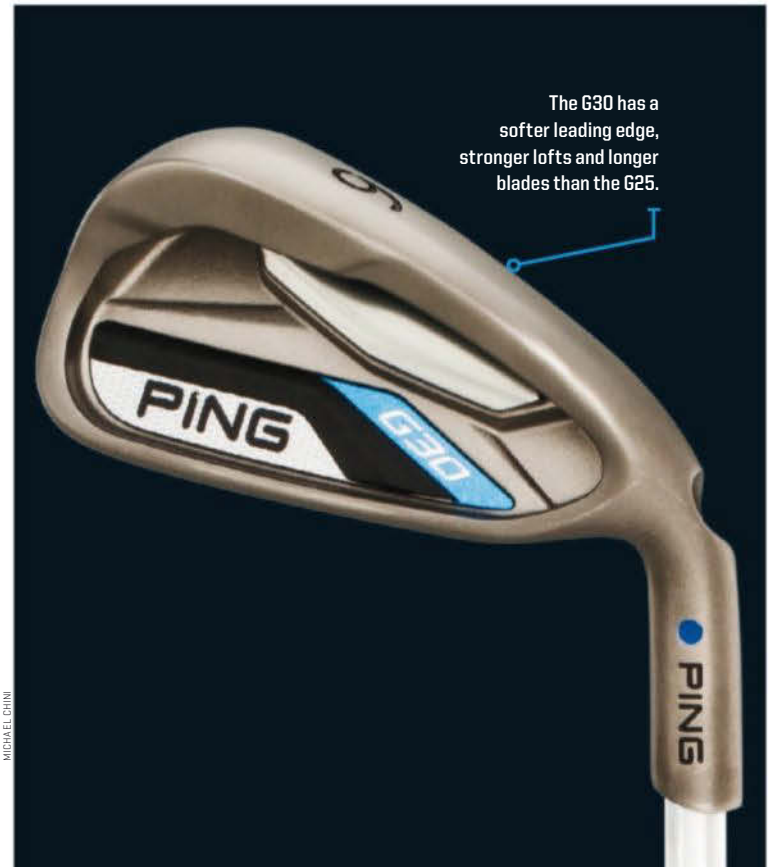
Feel: Flattens the ball at impact with a crisp, dense sound that's familiar to Ping fans; pretty much the same across the whole face–feels like you get every available yard out of each swing, regardless of how you catch it.

Look: Big, burly and matte gray; substantial at setup–the G30 looks as forgiving as it plays; quintessential Ping look should keep fans of the G-series happy.

CONS

You get plenty of metal for your money–some testers are turned off by the big, offset heads; tough to gauge around the greens–a handful of guys find it lacks the resonance and touch necessary for delicate shots; less workability than other players would prefer.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The archetypal game-improvement iron. Point-and-shoot consistency and autopilot forgiveness make the G30 ideal for weekend warriors who would rather squeeze in a quick nine than spend the time honing their games on the driving range.***



The G30 has a softer leading edge, stronger lofts and longer blades than the G25.

MICHAEL CHINI



Srixon welds a high-strength steel face to a soft, forged-carbon-steel body to boost distance.

JAMES WESTMAN

SRIXON Z 545

$1,000, steel; golf.com/srixon

We Tested: 3-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shaft

PROS

Playability: The Z 545 can deliver most shots on command; driving, obedient medium flight; the beveled sole chops through rough like a buzzsaw, while the low weighting pops the ball out of all sorts of tough spots.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: To many guys, the Z 545 offers a nice combination of accuracy and ease of use, with emphasis on precision; well-struck shots lock onto the line; thin hits get up and go—catch any groove and you'll be just fine.

Distance Control: More pop than you'd think given its look—average at worst, and one or two testers pick up a few yards over their current sets; overall, the Z 545 iron is consistent and easy to calibrate.

Feel: The sturdy clubhead seems to get the ball going quickly at impact; the Z 545 has good heft, which makes it easy to track throughout the entire swing.

Look: A knockout—arguably the best-looking iron in the game-improvement category; a medium-thin topline disguises its reassuring, weighty sole; a nice progression throughout the set, with fine-tuned scoring clubs giving way to comforting long irons; beautiful interplay between chrome and satin finish—this one shows up to work in a suit and tie.

CONS

Disappointing feel for many testers—indistinct impact sensation is a letdown for a forged club; the Z 545 lacks the overall forgiveness that a few guys would expect; others want a bit more length, particularly on misses.

BOTTOM LINE: *The Z 545 iron offers model-good looks with satisfactory performance. This one's worth a look for mid-handicappers seeking to transition toward a player's iron without totally taking off the training wheels.*

TAYLORMADE RSi1

$800, steel; **$900,** graphite; golf.com/taylormade

We Tested: 3-PW with Reax 90 steel shaft and 3-PW with Reax 65 graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: Useful in tough lies—sharp, substantial sole is unfazed by thick turf; malleable trajectory manages everything from knockdowns to moon shots; mostly straight but can work basic draws and fades with a little effort; short irons are surprisingly deft.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: A good balance of accuracy and forgiveness; shots fly rail-straight, like they're on a track, with almost no curve; misses—even some thin shots—often get up around the green, which is pleasing to see.

Distance Control: The club's strongest performance category; RSi1 short irons are laser-guided on scoring shots; less than perfect strikes go a respectable distance; good bite from this game-improvement model.

Feel: It's all about power, with a solid crunch at impact that packs plenty of juice; the RSi1 plays on the heavy side—easy to track and rock-steady through the turf; the clubface seems to take the edge out of poor contact.

Look: Lots of support here, with a reasonably thick topline and the weight low; wears its forgiveness right on the face—channels around the hitting area are a little exotic but can be reassuring; plenty to remind you that TaylorMade's engineers have your back.

CONS

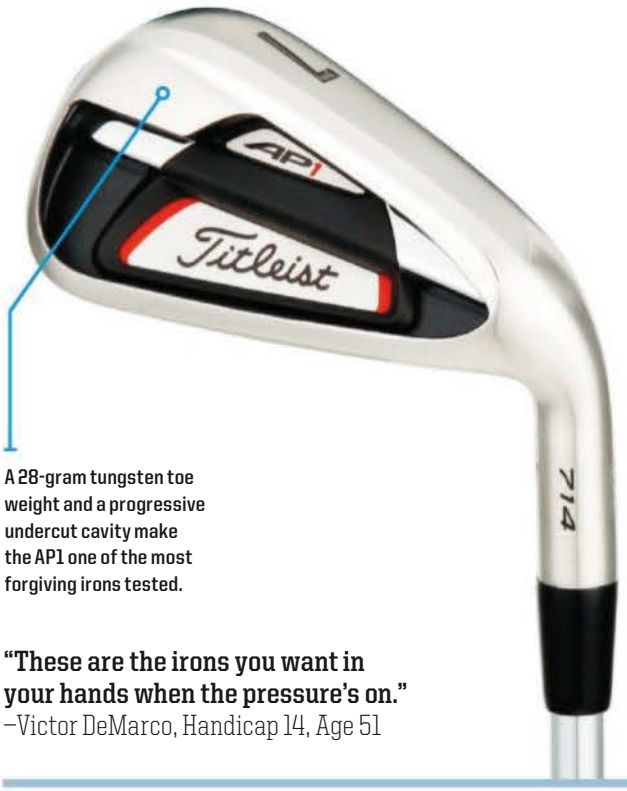
The RSi1 has black lines framing the hitting area that can be distracting; some guys want a more rewarding or polished feel at impact; not everyone experiences ultimate consistency and control on misses with the long irons.

BOTTOM LINE: *The RSi1's bold, progressive design offers a pleasing blend of agility, length and forgiveness.*



Cutouts in the sole, cavity and face lead to more consistent ball speed on misses.

MICHAEL CHINI



A 28-gram tungsten toe weight and a progressive undercut cavity make the AP1 one of the most forgiving irons tested.

"These are the irons you want in your hands when the pressure's on."
–Victor DeMarco, Handicap 14, Age 51

SNAP 36

TITLEIST AP1 714

$800, steel; **$1,000,** graphite; golf.com/titleist

We Tested: 4-GW with True Temper XP 95 steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Sky-high and arrow-straight; allows for some creativity; the heads are substantial enough to charge through the rough, nimble enough to handle sand and tight spots.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Top marks–the AP1 makes some testers wonder how they got so good all of the sudden; readily repeatable, with minimal unwanted sidespin and more than you deserve on misses; you don't need to catch it on the screws for a look at birdie.

Distance Control: One of the longest–maybe a half club over what several testers play; for many, the most consistent club tested–salvages good mileage out of poor lies.

Feel: Flush, crushing sensation at impact with a nice mix of meaningful feedback and muffled reverb; Rock of Gibraltar-stable through the turf; beautifully balanced, with enough heft to keep moving in tough spots.

Look: Utilitarian at address–meaty, muscular and most importantly, hittable; sits nicely behind the ball–lots of different players can draw confidence from this sort of club.

CONS

Too bulky looking for true traditionalists; the thick clubhead can discourage full-scale shotmaking; one or two guys find the wedges a tad clunky-feeling on finesse shots.

BOTTOM LINE: *One of the top-tested models, just as it was in 2014. This tried-and-true game-improvement iron is ideal for mid-handicap weekend warriors in the market for a user-friendly, all-purpose club.*

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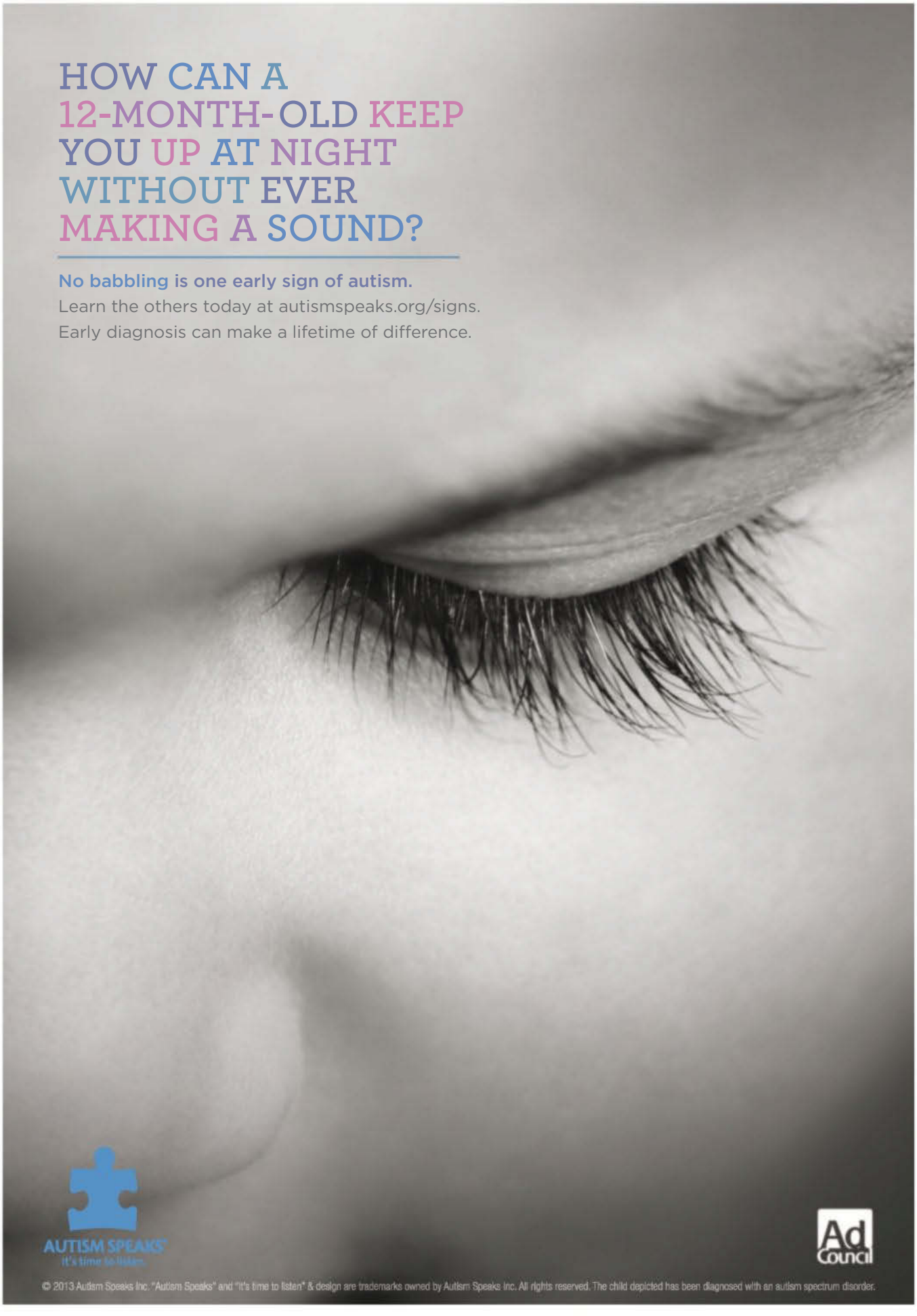


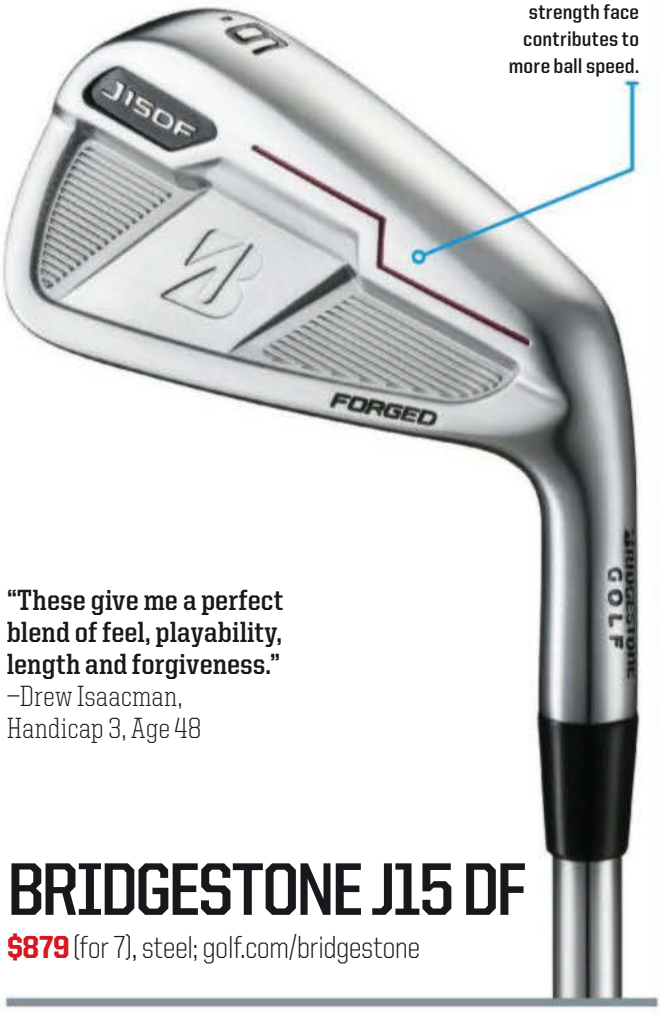
Let's talk tech! Managing Editor Rob Sauerhaft highlights game-changing products.

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A hidden cavity behind the high-strength face contributes to more ball speed.

"These give me a perfect blend of feel, playability, length and forgiveness."
–Drew Isaacman,
Handicap 3, Age 48

BRIDGESTONE J15 DF

$879 (for 7), steel; golf.com/bridgestone

We tested: 4-PW with True Temper DG Pro steel shaft

PROS

Playability: The J15 DF produces a high, beautiful flight time after time; rounded sole flows through the turf; maneuverable and responsive–short irons are an absolute flag-hunting pleasure to hit.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Consistent directionally on shots hit all over the clubface; absolute money on delicate touch shots.

Distance Control: Hitting controlled shots to very specific distances becomes second nature; many guys experience little to no distance loss on minor misses.

Feel: Good balance and weighting make it easy to find the center of the face; smooth and silky on solid hits; clubhead feels heavier than average during the swing.

Look: Head sits beautifully behind the ball and inspires confidence; minimal offset, thin topline and understated graphics; all the forgiveness is well hidden–attractive cavity design isn't overbearing at all.

CONS

Some testers notice definite distance loss on off-center contact; the mid- and long irons can be too demanding for a few guys.

BOTTOM LINE: *One of the higher-ranked models tested. The J15 DF offers the versatility and look that better players want.*

COURTESY BRIDGESTONE

CALLAWAY XR PRO

$900, steel; golf.com/callaway

We tested: 3-9 with KBS Tour V90 steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Meaty sole gives you the ability to slash through the thickest stuff–this club shines in the rough and other trouble shots; testers can move the ball in either direction without much effort; a relatively penetrating flight.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: One of the more forgiving sets in the better-player category; high marks for consistency, particularly if long and straight is what you want; short irons are real pin-seekers.

Distance Control: Its strongest asset–some guys pick up as much as one full club over their current set; testers rave about the distance on center strikes and report strong carry on misses as well.

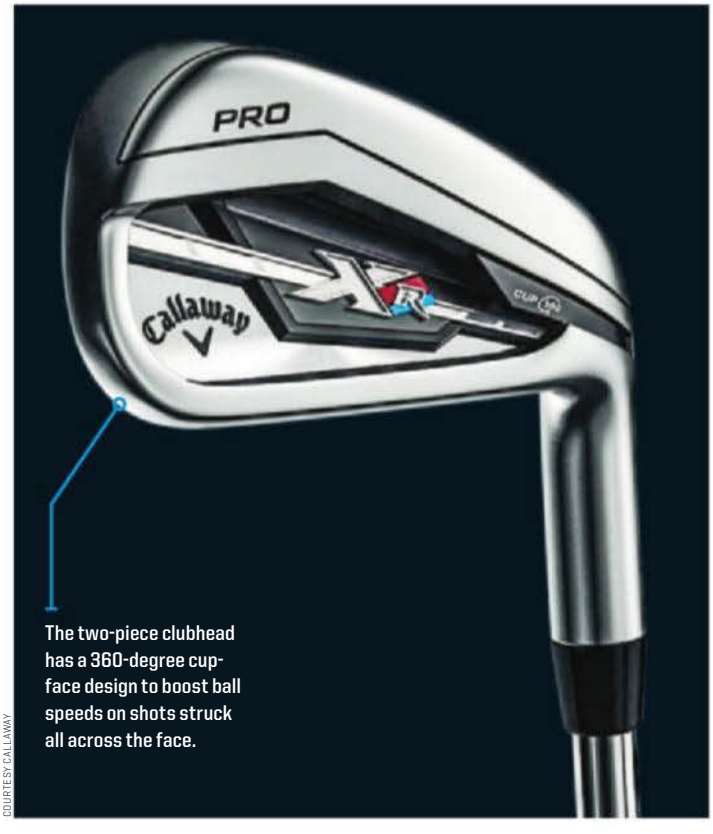
Feel: Soft, dampened impact sound and feel on misses with the XR Pro; stable, well-balanced sticks throughout the swing; some testers report a noticeable rebound effect at impact that makes balls jump off the face.

Look: For a handful of guys, the midsize face is reassuring at address; a thicker topline and wider sole than most tested; attractive, solid appearance overall.

CONS

Hot face can make it tough to gauge touch shots; it's more sedan than sports car–some panelists want a sleeker look; a few testers struggle to flight the ball down with the scoring clubs.

BOTTOM LINE: *A very powerful club that offers a bit more help on misses than many others in the category. The XR Pro is a smart option for guys looking to move from a game-improvement model into the better-player category.*



The two-piece clubhead has a 360-degree cup-face design to boost ball speeds on shots struck all across the face.

COURTESY CALLAWAY



The forged carbon steel 3- to 7-irons have undercuts that let the face flex more.

MICHAEL CHINI

COBRA FLY-Z+

$900, steel; golf.com/cobra

We Tested: 3-PW with KBS Tour steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Lots of weight along the bottom to power through rough, divots and sand; medium-high ball flight is higher than most; it's relatively easy to work the ball–allows testers to repeatedly pull off whatever they dial up.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: You get exactly what you expect from each shot, no better, no worse; slight off-center shots are minimized in direction–good at disguising mis-hits all over the face; quite accurate–pretty much a point-and-shoot club.

Distance Control: Off-center strikes with the Fly-Z+ aren't penalized too severely; little loss of distance on thin shots.

Feel: There's enough heft in the Fly-Z+ clubhead to sense the stability throughout your swing; the club puts you in total control of partial shots; good feedback across a generous sweet spot.

Look: Nice, stylish appearance that's not overbearing; subtly combines visible technology and a cavity-back in an attractive modern package; all-satin look, thin topline, minimal offset; head makes you think you can dig it out of anywhere.

CONS

A few testers are looking for a bit more workability; off-center hits can sting; some guys would prefer even more length.

BOTTOM LINE: ***Suitable for a wider range of handicaps than your typical player's iron. The Fly-Z+ is worth a try if you like to shape the occasional shot but want to count on forgiveness when not swinging your best.***

MIZUNO MP-15

$1,000, steel; **$1,100,** graphite; golf.com/mizuno

We Tested: 3-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Think up any shot you want–the MP-15 is up to the task; very thin sole that promotes workability–easy to turn either way on command; performs well on hilly lies; medium, penetrating ball flight; sole glides through all types of lies and turf.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Slight mis-hits with the MP-15 still look and feel pretty good; the muscle cavity adds some surprising forgiveness in terms of both distance and direction.

Distance Control: Predictable and reliable, with more than ample carry; very easy to dial in; most guys are in tune with the distances quickly, no need to think too much.

Feel: You instantly know how you hit the shot; maybe not quite as soft as other, more blade-like MPs but still quite nice; few companies deliver feel the way Mizuno does.

Look: The MP-15 is one of the prettiest models tested; a classic chrome finish combines with a simple, thin topline and a fairly small sole to make for a winning look; Mizuno delivers again with a great combination of tradition and technology.

CONS

For some testers, there's not enough forgiveness, especially from the rough; others find that the MP-15 is slightly shorter than their current set; one or two guys struggle to dial in carry distances on less than full shots.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The MP-15 iron provides Mizuno's classic look with a satisfying feel, a good amount of versatility and a bit more forgiveness than a pure MP muscleback.***



Swapping steel for lighter titanium in the large, recessed area behind the sweet spot shifts more mass to the perimeter.

MICHAEL CHINI



The 3- through 6-irons have stainless-steel bodies, maraging steel face inserts and wide soles for a low, deep CG.

MICHAEL CHINI

MIZUNO MP-H5

$1,000, steel; **$1,100,** graphite; golf.com/mizuno

We Tested: 3-PW with FST KBS C-Taper Lite steel shaft

PROS

Playability: All shots start high and stay high–well above many other models in the category; ball seems to want to travel straight no matter how you swing; repeatable flight on shots hit from every lie imaginable; the MP-H5 long irons play like Mizuno's Fli-Hi hybrids.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: One of the most forgiving MP iron sets ever made; testers can make almost any swing and get high, straight results; very accurate–take dead aim and let it fly.

Distance Control: The MP-H5 iron produces consistent, reliable yardages–testers could step up to a shot and trust that they have the distance to hit it; mis-hits with the mid-irons lose little yardage; a few guys get noticeably longer carry numbers than they do with their current sets.

Feel: Short irons deliver responsive feedback off the face; the club's weight and balance keep you down through the shot; stable through impact; the ball seems to stay on the face a long time on touch shots.

Look: A gorgeous set that transitions seamlessly from short to long irons; beautiful satin chrome finish, medium topline and progressive offset; appearance at address inspires confidence while maintaining the characteristics of a player's club.

CONS

Additional forgiveness is there but at the expense of some workability; a few testers struggle to play them out of fairway bunkers; short irons have slightly larger faces than your typical player's blade iron.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The MP-H5 would be a great introduction for someone who's not used to better-player irons. It's a dependable, low-anxiety club that's easy to hit and plenty long.***

NIKE VAPOR PRO

$1,000, steel; golf.com/nike

We Tested: 4-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Most playable iron tested, there's no shot you can't hit; shaping shots is easy–if you can't work the ball with these, you can't work the ball; the thin blades get down to any lie and are helpful in picking the ball off hardpan or bare spots.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: The Vapor Pros are a lot like old-style blades, with just a touch of forgiveness; deadly accurate in the hands of the right player–they go exactly where you hit them; these are like surgical tools, letting highly skilled golfers dissect a course with ease.

Distance Control: No surprises here–predictable distances on full shots and on knockdowns; comparable to other irons when hit well; most panelists are able to control them in no time at all.

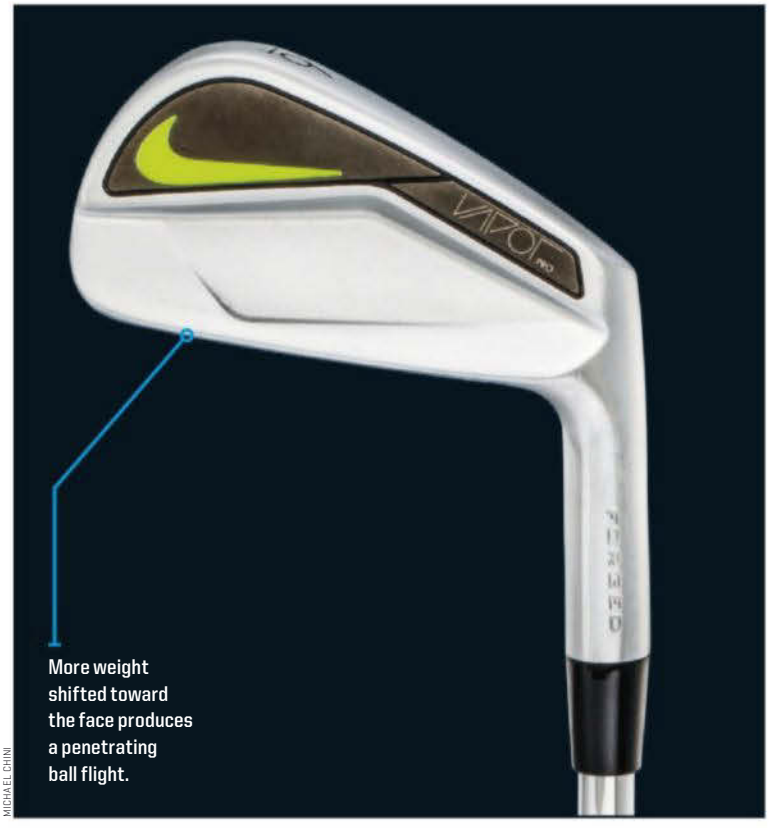
Feel: Many guys haven't felt a club like this in a long time–it reminds them of a classic forging on good strikes; well-balanced and easy to swing; pure contact feels amazing; just tears through the ball.

Look: The Vapor Pro is a pure-looking player's stick with the thinnest topline and clubhead in the test; it has an old-school appearance; the brushed nickel finish is a nice touch; beautiful, no-nonsense blades–short irons are absolutely gorgeous.

CONS

The Vapor Pro isn't for the faint of heart–off-center hits sting in the hands; probably the least forgiving iron in the test–the small sweet spot frustrates many players; typical misses are punished with distance loss and directional variance.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The Vapor Pro performs more like the forged blades of yesteryear than anything else in the test. Bring your A-game and you'll enjoy its wonderful, distinct feel and tons of versatility.***



More weight shifted toward the face produces a penetrating ball flight.

MICHAEL CHINI



Stabilizing bars contribute to high-launching long irons and lower-flying short irons.

MICHAEL CHINI

PING i25

$800, steel; **$1,000,** graphite; golf.com/ping

We Tested: 4-PW with CFS steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Consistent, repeatable flight; medium-high trajectory that sits quickly on the green; easy to maneuver; manageable from a variety of lies and grasses—takes every situation head-on.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: The i25's greatest strength—very accurate, and the extreme weighting in the clubhead all but erases directional misses; some guys find the forgiveness in the longer irons makes them more like a game-improvement club than a true player's iron.

Distance Control: No surprises here—the i25 is reliable on both center and off-center strikes; easy to hit predictable lengths; touch shots with the short irons are simple and controllable.

Feel: The i25 is well balanced and stable throughout the swing; very good sensation at impact.

Look: An attractive, thin profile; surprisingly clean at address, with more of a modern look behind the face; hides its game-improvement elements well—minimal offset, medium topline, square setup.

CONS

Some guys don't see much improvement over the i20s; doesn't quite have the look that other testers seek in a player's iron; a few guys find it more difficult to work side to side than they'd like.

BOTTOM LINE: ***This iron finds the middle ground between a pure player's stick and a game-improvement iron. Those looking to graduate from more forgiving game-improvement irons would have an easy transition into this model.***

SRIXON Z 745

$1,000, steel; golf.com/srixon

We Tested: 3-PW with True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Relatively easy workability—these heads allow for some degree of shot shaping; long irons fly high and straight; the weighty, beveled sole glides through all different conditions and helps get the ball up fast; the Z 745 controls trajectory as well as anything out there.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Midsize clubhead helps correct minor transgressions; directional misses are covered well; very precise with the short irons and accurate enough everywhere else.

Distance Control: One of the tops in the test; longer than most irons without sacrificing reliability; very consistent length—so easy to dial in; excellent performer out of rough, almost no distance lost.

Feel: Soft and consistent through the set; delightful, controlled sensation on full and half shots; the right amount of feedback—good shots are flush, and even mis-hits feel strong and stable.

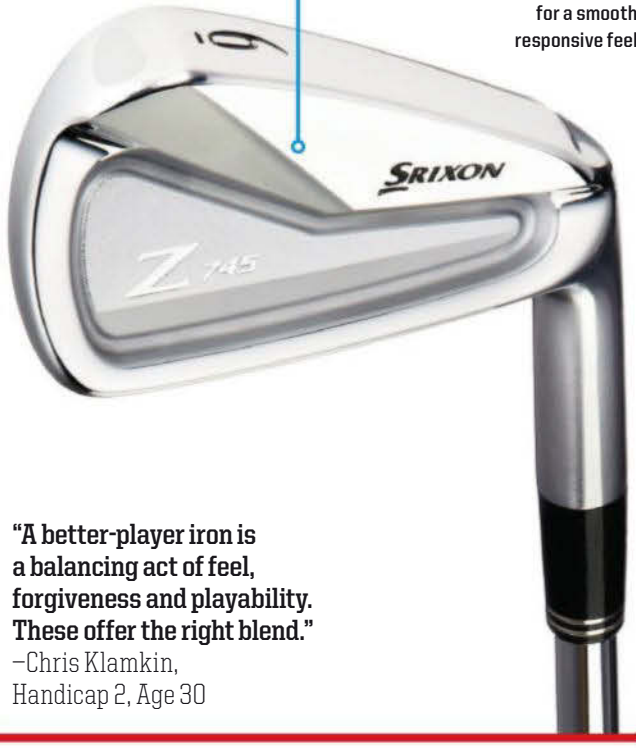
Look: Simple, elegant and dull—in a good way; pure, classic look; longish from heel to toe; the thin topline and medium-width sole add to the package.

CONS

A few guys want to see a bit more distance out of misses; one or two testers can't maneuver shots quite as easily as they'd like.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The top-rated iron in the better-player category records high scores across the board. Its biggest drawback just might be the lack of name recognition.***

The compact muscle-cavity blade is forged from soft carbon steel for a smooth, responsive feel.



JAMES WESTMAN

"A better-player iron is a balancing act of feel, forgiveness and playability. These offer the right blend."
—Chris Klamkin, Handicap 2, Age 30



Cast stainless-steel long irons with tungsten weighting produce high-launching shots; forged-face short irons provide enhanced impact feel.

TAYLORMADE RSi2

$1,000, steel; **$1,200,** graphite; golf.com/taylormade

We Tested: 3-SW with KBS Tour 105 steel shaft

PROS

Playability: The slightly beveled leading edge works equally well through fairway or rough without digging; the RSi2 flights the ball high and straight–great for that better golfer who wants to elevate shots; a nice progression through the set–scoring clubs are maneuverable, while the long irons tend to decrease sidespin.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Its strongest attribute–where this club really shines; testers say it's almost hard to hit it offline–the RSi2 straightens out nearly every shot; very predictable and highly accurate; very generous sweet spot for a club aimed at better players.

Distance Control: Easy to rely on; shots from the rough go almost as far as those from the fairway; off-center contact gets some guys more yards than their current irons do; similar distances as testers' current sets, but more consistent from shot to shot.

Feel: The entire clubface feels like a trampoline; there's plenty of feedback engineered into this cavity-back head–impact is well-communicated, with no harshness on misses.

Look: Vertical black slots on the face contrast with the grooves to provide a vivid image of the sweet spot; the midsize RSi2 head sits perfectly square at address; there's a lot of visible help built in; shorter irons have a clean profile without skimping on forgiveness.

CONS

Some guys have a hard time keeping the flight down with the RSi2 irons; other testers say it's forgiving to a fault–somewhat tough to curve the ball on command; there's little differentiation in feel no matter where on the face you hit it, dead-center or not.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The RSi2 is one of the most stable, forgiving irons in the better-player category. Off-center contact doesn't pose a problem, which makes it easy to swing away with confidence.***

MICHAEL CHINI

TITLEIST AP2 714

$1,100, steel; **$1,300,** graphite; golf.com/titleist

We Tested: 4-PW with True Temper XP 95 steel shaft and True Temper Dynamic Gold steel shaft

PROS

Playability: Top marks in the test–there's not a shot that can't be played; these slide through any kind of lie; easy to work each way; very nimble through the impact zone–short irons are an inventive golfer's dream; a playable, medium-trajectory ball flight; performs well on knockdowns.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Easy to hit, with a ton of forgiveness for a better player's club; above-average accuracy–keeps sidespin in check; if you can see the flag, you can attack it.

Distance Control: The AP2 714 iron is the epitome of consistency, with top-shelf control on all sorts of swings–full or otherwise–and locked-in gaps from club to club; not the longest sticks, but most guys find that these don't punish moderate misses, directionally or length-wise.

Feel: Ideal weight and balance; buttery-soft, forged feel–the clubhead does a nice job of masking unwanted vibrations; for some testers, the AP2 714 is the softest, most playable iron they've felt in a long time.

Look: Sleek, high-dollar setup; a player's club appearance despite all the forgiveness packed in–great job of incorporating its technology; properly proportioned head doesn't intimidate or offend; oozes class and traditionalism.

CONS

A few testers lose a bit more distance than they'd like on misses; one or two guys would like more help from their longer irons.

BOTTOM LINE: ***For the second year running, the AP2 714 gets high marks across the board. Once again, it's one of the top-performing models in the test.***

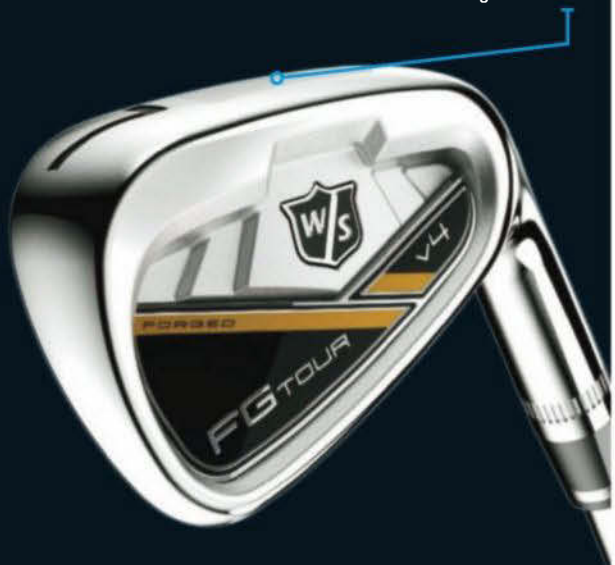


The long and mid-irons have 40 grams of tungsten co-forged into the hosel, which spreads mass lower and wider than in previous models.

"This is the gold standard that irons should be judged upon."
–Dave Doctora, Handicap 6, Age 41

SNAP P.36

The 3- through 7-irons have an 18-gram tungsten sole weight that lowers the CG for a higher launch.



COURTESY WILSON STAFF

"This classic-looking club offers me a little extra help in the mid- and long irons."–Jeff McKinney, Handicap 9, Age 54

WILSON STAFF FG TOUR V4

$900, steel; golf.com/wilson

We Tested: 4-GW with True Temper DG Pro steel shaft

PROS

Playability: It's clear that Wilson Staff paid attention to turf interaction–the versatile sole shape plays great out of rough and bad lies; piercing, controlled medium-low flight–very strong in the wind; partial swings are spot-on, a real pleasure to play.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: One of the tops in the test; very accurate, and forgiving–almost hard not to hit straight; like throwing darts–every shot looks the same; just automatic–these put you in a position to score.

Distance Control: Relatively long and extremely consistent; very simple to dial in distances, since mis-hits tend to fly close to full; easy to replicate shot after shot.

Feel: Nicely balanced clubs; the FG Tour V4 is solid and stable through impact; a strong feel that's full of feedback.

Look: Not the sleekest iron but competent–dressed for work, not a formal event; graphics and emblem are well placed and not distracting.

CONS

Not quite as workable as some other better-player models; a few guys expect a softer feel from a forging; one or two testers say the club has a slight left tendency.

BOTTOM LINE: ***One of the better irons tested. It straddles the line between a game-improvement and better-player club, with a high degree of accuracy and forgiveness.***

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The 6-iron through PW have an updated sole slot that extends around the toe to produce more consistent face flex–and yardage–on misses.

MICHAEL CHINI

ADAMS IDEA TECH

$800, steel; **$900,** graphite; golf.com/adams

We tested: 3-hybrid through 5-hybrid, 6-PW with Mitsubishi Rayon Fubuki graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: The Idea Tech produces a consistently high ball flight that wants to go straight; very easy to get airborne with smooth swings; great for players who just want to hit the ball at the target.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: One of the top-ranked clubs for forgiveness; just point and shoot–hard to hit in the wrong direction; toe misses correct nicely; almost everything goes straight without much distance loss.

Distance Control: Idea Tech is fairly predictable once you figure out how far each club goes; acceptable when it comes to dialing in yardages; similar to what testers are used to length-wise.

Feel: Weighty and stable through the swing; a muted thud at impact announces solid contact; powerful sensation lets you know you crushed it on good strikes.

Look: Better-looking than most hybrid-iron sets; the meaty heads throughout the set make you think you'll kill it; hybrids disguised as mid-irons give plenty of confidence over the ball.

CONS

The Idea Tech is not quite as long as a few others in the test; less feedback at impact than some testers prefer; not everyone's favorite for precise scoring shots around the greens.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The Idea Tech is a well-blended, highly forgiving hybrid-iron set that should be a good match for players seeking straight, high-trajectory shots.***

BRIDGESTONE J15 CAST

$700 (for 7), steel; golf.com/bridgestone

We tested: 5–8, PW, AW with Nippon N.S. Pro 950GH steel shaft

PROS

Playability: One of the highest-rated clubs in this category; easy to play shots from tight and sidehill lies; no problem moving shots in either direction if you make a good swing; some of our stronger testers can hit them high or low when necessary.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Center shots with the J15 Cast go right where you want them; the clubs keep slight misses relatively online; distance loss on iffy contact won't kill you.

Distance Control: Similar to most testers' own clubs on solidly struck shots; reliable, predictable distances on medium and short shots into greens.

Feel: Not quite as sweet as soft forged but impressive for the category; tons of feedback lets you know when and where you missed it; good weight and balance make them easy to swing.

Look: One of the favorites; traditional appearance, almost like a players' iron at address despite its thicker topline; better looking than you'd expect from a pretty forgiving iron.

CONS

The J15 doesn't provide as much help on misses as many others in the test; not as long as some testers would like; mis-hits can feel harsh.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The J15 Cast offers a top-tier combination of feel, look, and playability for the max game-improvement category.***



The oversize head has a 360-degree undercut channel to boost face flex and ball speed.

COURTESY BRIDGESTONE

Prices listed are for a set of eight irons.



A strip of metal runs heel-to-toe behind the face to shift the CG low and forward, which directs more energy into the ball.

COURTESY CALLAWAY

CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA

$1,000, steel; **$1,200,** graphite; golf.com/callaway

We tested: 4-PW with True Temper Speed Step 85 steel shaft and 4-PW with UST Mamiya Recoil 460 graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: No problem launching high shots without ballooning; surprisingly easy to sweep from different lies; straight shots or slight draws are the norm with the Big Bertha.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: The most forgiving model in the max game-improvement category; very tight dispersion—keeps you in play no matter how you hit it; maintains distance on misses as well as any set out there and makes slices nearly extinct.

Distance Control: The Big Berthas are long—a few testers say they're a half-club longer than usual; once you get used to the distance, they're reliable on most approach shots; forgiveness makes it easy to predict how far the ball will travel.

Feel: Good compression through the ball; reasonable feedback tells you enough to know how well you struck it; ample weight makes them feel like they swing themselves.

Look: Decent setup for an iron with this much forgiveness—sits squarely behind the ball and aligns with ease; they pack a lot of technology into this package.

CONS

A few testers couldn't control shots from the rough, and other trouble lies, as they expected; feel isn't quite as lively as a few other models; a little clunky-looking compared with some competitors' max game-improvement irons.

BOTTOM LINE: ***Outstanding forgiveness with very good distance make the Callaway Big Bertha irons a must-try for higher-handicappers.***

CLEVELAND CG BLACK

$700 (for 7), steel; **$800** (for 7), graphite; golf.com/cleveland

We tested: 4-hybrid, 5-hybrid, 6-PW with Mitsubishi Rayon Bassara graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: Best for hitting draws, although stronger players even find them adequate for shaping shots both ways; a high-flyer that gets the ball up in the air from just about any lie; if you like hitting the ball high and straight, these sticks get it done.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Solid hits are right on the mark, and misses aren't too far off—doesn't lose much distance unless you really miss one badly; minimal sidespin keeps the slices at bay on poor hits.

Distance Control: As long as you catch it okay, expect consistent yardage through the set; pretty long overall, with very few unhappy surprises—you can feel confident that the club you pick up will get the number you need.

Feel: Nice, lively response at impact; balance is good for a lightweight iron—easy to swing, yet testers know where the club is throughout the motion.

Look: Black finish reduces glare and looks expensive; sets up pretty well behind the ball despite plenty of offset; the shape of the clubhead fits its size.

CONS

Forgiveness on mis-hits isn't as good as some testers might have hoped; difficult to tell good shots from bad at times; the black finish wears quickly.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The lightweight CG Black iron is a solid all-around performer that provides ample distance with plenty of height and passable forgiveness.***



With these light sticks, slower swingers benefit from extra clubhead speed.

MICHAEL CHINI

Hollow stainless steel mid-irons and hybrid long irons help to produce higher shots.



COURTESY COBRA

COBRA FLY-Z XL

$500, steel; **$700,** graphite; golf.com/cobra

We Tested: 4-GW with KBS CPI-1005 steel shaft, and 4-hybrid through 6-hybrid plus 7-GW with Fly-Z XL graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: Produces a consistently high ball flight without overdoing it on altitude; the Fly-Z XL easily launches the ball from the rough and other trouble lies; shaped shots can be manufactured with some effort.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Directional control is this club's stock-in-trade—not a lot of unwanted curvature; even slight misses remain relatively on target; dispersion and distance loss are minimized on typical mistakes.

Distance Control: Consistent length on solid hits from shot to shot; yardages are close to what testers are used to, so it's easy to dial in from the fairway.

Feel: The heavy clubhead is stable throughout the swing and is simple to track at all times; there's decent pop through impact when you connect for solid contact; adequate feedback on shots struck away from the sweet spot.

Look: Slightly thicker topline and visible cavity give the impression that they'll provide plenty of help; lots of technology, but the clubs still set up well behind the ball; gray area on the face makes alignment easy.

CONS

Carry distance on solid hits is on par with testers' current sets, but they'd still like more length; some guys want more feedback as to how well they struck it; takes effort to produce the occasional lower-trajectory shot.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The Cobra Fly-Z XL is a high-flying club that's perfectly reliable for higher-handicappers.***

MIZUNO JPX-850

$800, steel; **$900,** graphite; golf.com/mizuno

We Tested: 4-GW with True Temper XP 105 steel shaft and 4-GW with Fujikura Orochi graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: The top-rated model in this category; trajectory control is the best of the bunch—these sticks produce a nice medium flight that's easily managed; good for recovery shots from the rough and around the greens.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Dispersion pattern is pretty tight; the JPX-850 is predictable on all but the worst hits—shots track to the target when you execute properly.

Distance Control: Tops in the test; can dial in distances almost as though you're playing a blade; shines on approach shots and is great for flag hunting; mis-hits maintain their distance.

Feel: The JPX-850 is the best of the bunch; not quite the impact feel of a Mizuno MP better-player offering, but for some guys it's close to the soft, pleasing sensation of one; you instantly know where on the face you hit it.

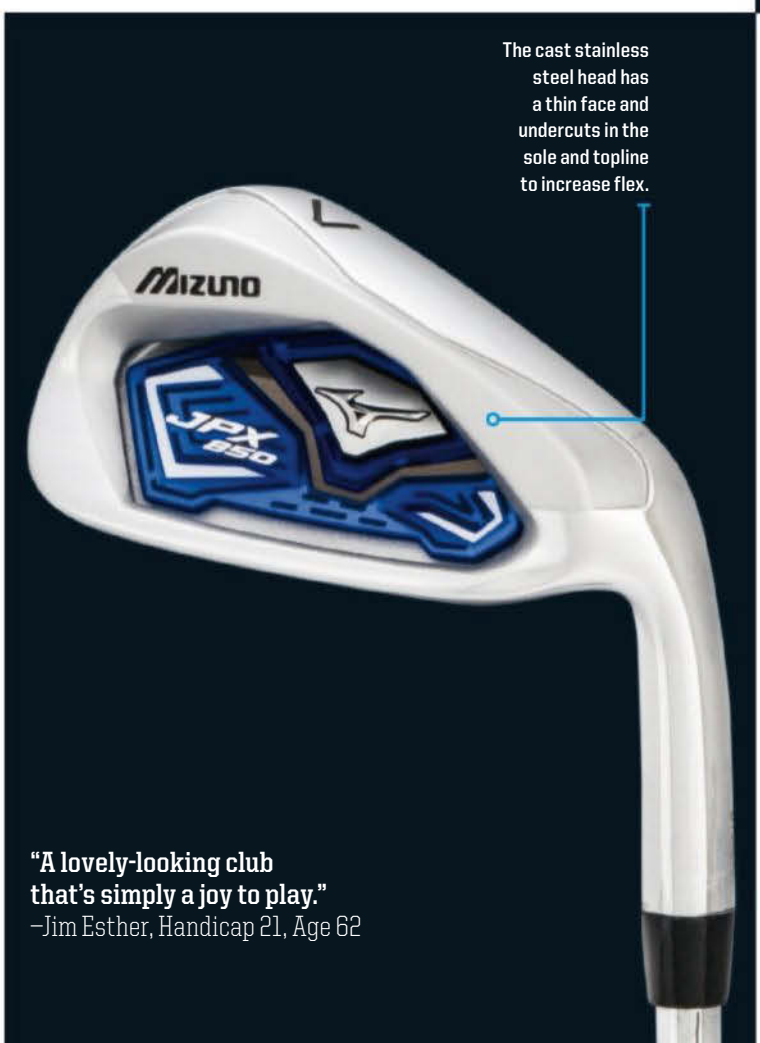
Look: One of the best-looking sticks in its class; these are max game-improvement irons that could pass as a player's club; classic look at address with just the right amount of offset.

CONS

Not for beginners or guys who need a lot of help—the JPX-850 doesn't provide the extreme forgiveness or moon-shot launch natural to many of its max game-improvement peers; misses can feel a bit harsh.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The JPX-850 iron is one of the top-rated models. It offers top-shelf feel and look and provides plenty of distance.***

The cast stainless steel head has a thin face and undercuts in the sole and topline to increase flex.



"A lovely-looking club that's simply a joy to play."
–Jim Esther, Handicap 21, Age 62

MICHAEL CHINI



The 2- through 7-irons have hollow bodies reinforced with thin ridges called "FlyBeams" that are designed to improve energy transfer at impact.

"These give me great control, they enhance my short game and help my misses."–David Sullivan, Handicap 19, Age 47

MANFRED KOH

NIKE VAPOR SPEED

$800, steel; **$900,** graphite; golf.com/nike

We Tested: 4-PW with True Temper Dynalite 105 steel shaft and 4-PW with Mitsubishi Fubuki Z 70 graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: Among the top-ranked models in the category; can be worked in either direction with relative ease by our stronger players; consistent medium-high ball flight; very useful from tough lies.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Pretty decent directional control–wild shots are minimized; minor misses maintain distance fairly well.

Distance Control: The Vapor Speed is one of the better models tested; guys hit shots pin-high all day with the shorter irons; high ball flight leads to very good distance, even into the wind.

Feel: About as good as it gets in this category; soft at impact, with ample feedback that tells you all you need to know; delivers an explosive message to the hands on good shots; light overall weight but is surprisingly stable through the ball.

Look: Receives the highest marks from our testers; you won't have to make excuses to your buddies when you pull these out of the bag; a classic profile that doesn't give you the impression of a max game-improvement iron.

CONS

Not as much help on mis-hits as you'd expect from a max game-improvement design–decent forgiveness compared with some others; a little light for a few players' tastes; the thinner sole width and minimal offset can make them a bit harder to hit than some others in their class.

BOTTOM LINE: ***One of the best performers in the test. The Vapor Speed is more of a game-improvement model than a pure max game-improvement club, but these handsome sticks score high for feel and overall playability.***

PING KARSTEN

$615, steel; **$750,** graphite; golf.com/ping

We Tested: 5-PW with CFS Distance steel shaft and 5-PW with KS 401 graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: You'll hit these straight without a lot of variance; they like to go somewhere between high and higher, though most guys could flight them down if necessary; wide soles are friendly from moderate rough and pretty good around the greens.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: Easy to hit straight, with very little side-to-side dispersion; as long as you make decent contact they go about where you expect; exceptional at salvaging the yards you need out of mediocre strikes.

Distance Control: About the same carry distances as many testers' current sets but more consistent from shot to shot; you get what you expect on fairway shots; delivers the goods on toe or heel contact.

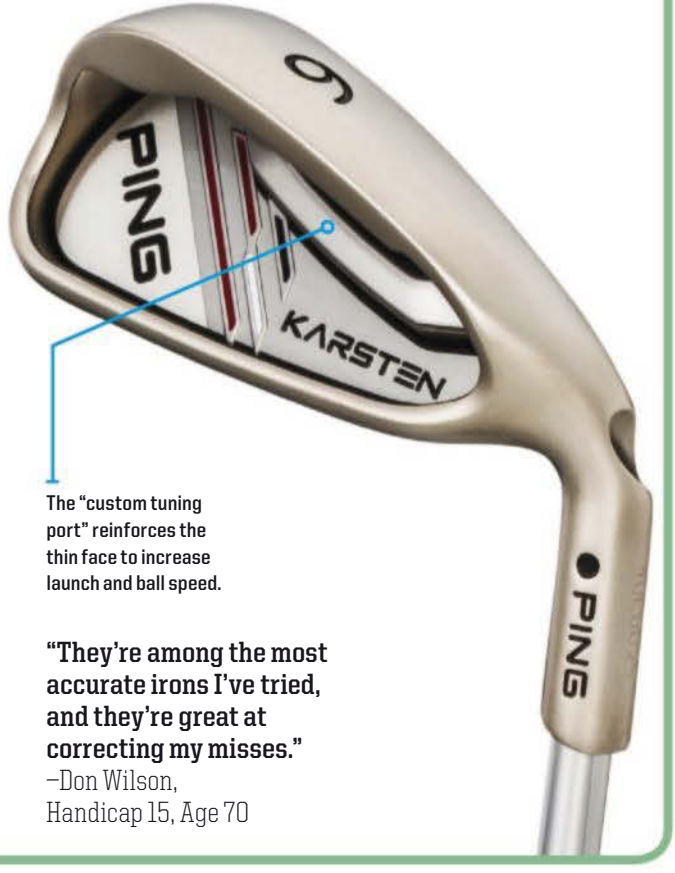
Feel: Beautifully balanced throughout the swing, with excellent stability through impact; transmits fairly good feedback to the hands; softer than you'd expect from a cast Ping iron.

Look: They look like Pings; the large clubhead and wide sole sit nicely at address; fairly thick topline gives plenty of confidence that you'll hit it well.

CONS

They don't produce the big-time distance some testers expect; for a few in our panel, it can be hard to feel the difference between a solid strike and a mis-hit; one or two guys are inconsistent when chipping or pitching around the greens.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The Karsten iron is one of the top models tested. This carryover model from 2014 is a dependable, all-around performer.***



The "custom tuning port" reinforces the thin face to increase launch and ball speed.

"They're among the most accurate irons I've tried, and they're great at correcting my misses."
–Don Wilson, Handicap 15, Age 70

MICHAEL CHINI



Heavy tungsten weights low in the heel and toe add to the head's stability.

TOUR EDGE EXOTICS E8

$600-$700, steel; **$800,** graphite; golf.com/touredge

We Tested: 4-AW with KBS Tour 90 steel shaft and 4-AW with UST Mamiya Recoil 460 F3 graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: The wide sole really gets through all types of rough; responds well to less than full swings in the scoring zone; easy to get shots flying high and straight.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: These sticks won't cover up all your misses, but they do a decent job of minimizing the worst ones; the Exotics E8 maintains distance reasonably well when you don't hit it absolutely pure.

Distance Control: Shorter irons do a good job of nailing the right distance, while yardages are basically predictable through the rest of the set; the Exotics E8 is no longer than testers' own sticks, but it's long enough to score.

Feel: Very satisfying on center contact; a real sense of compression at impact–they're dynamite when struck well; minimal sting in the hands when you miss one in a bad spot.

Look: The long blade provides a ton of confidence at address; good combination of a traditional chrome finish and a nice shape; you can see a lot of technology, but it's not distracting.

CONS

Some testers don't get as much help on off-center hits as they do with other models; the longer irons don't perform quite as well overall as the rest of the set; not one of the longest hitters tested.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The Exotics E8 nicely blends accuracy, look and feel, but it doesn't fare as well as the category leaders for forgiveness and length.***

COURTESY TOUR EDGE

WILSON STAFF D200

$600, steel; **$700,** graphite; golf.com/wilson

We Tested: 4-GW with True Temper SL 85 steel shaft and 4-GW with UST Mamiya Elements Chrome graphite shaft

PROS

Playability: The D200 produces a high, soft flight that can hold any green; very solid from thicker rough and other trouble lies; it's up to the challenge when your situation calls for a three-quarter shot or a knockdown.

Accuracy/Forgiveness: One of the highest-rated models; thin and toe shots don't lose much, and they go where they're aimed; other misses find a way to get on the green; not a lot of unintentional curving.

Distance Control: One of the D200's strongest attributes; they're green-hitting machines; decent strikes travel as expected; plenty of distance when flushed, about a half club longer than many testers' current sticks.

Feel: They're light, but you can still tell where the clubhead is at all times; smooth through the ball with some life at impact; no sensation of twisting or turning, even in the rough.

Look: At address, the thick topline hides a large cavity; for some guys, the brushed chrome harks back to classic Wilson irons; naturally square setup and slight offset are easy to aim.

CONS

A few testers complain that mis-hits with the D200s produce a bit of sting in the hands; one or two guys have a more difficult time than expected getting their iron shots to stop quickly enough on greens.

BOTTOM LINE: ***The best iron model tested in the max game-improvement category. The D200 is a true standout that provides balanced performance highlighted by lots of length and forgiveness.***



A thin-walled transition area between the face and the sole increases ball speed on shots struck below the sweet spot.

"I'm always looking for an iron that's the total package. For me, the D200 is it."
–Kevin Kehoe, Handicap 18, Age 53

MICHAEL CHINI


a tripadvisor traveler review
"SECLUDED TROPICAL OASIS"
joeysal77, New York
St. Regis Bahía Beach Resort, Río Grande
This resort that is nestled on a 450+ acre preserve, surrounded by plush vegetation, gorgeous beachfront and a championship golf course, is truly a gem. I was able to play the 18-hole golf course, which featured the last three holes along the beach. To say the views weren't a distraction would be a lie. The work staff goes above and beyond; prompt butler service at the dial of a button or going out of their way to make sure "no" is never an answer. We would return here in a heartbeat. My wife and I have been to numerous island resorts over the years, and they are all junior varsity compared with this all-star.
Puerto Rico's luxury resorts give you more than spectacular scenery and top of the line services. They are five star world class attractions.
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BEST TRIPS

SPEND YOUR MONEY WELL

By Kaitlin Severini
Edited by Joe Passov

WORTH YOUR MONEY THIS MONTH

The Perfect Blend

Nicklaus Design's TPC Cartagena at Karibana has Colombia percolating

TPC Cartagena at Karibana
Cartagena, Colombia
7,074 yards, par 72
+57 5 6424700, tpc.com/cartagena-golf



Photograph by TPC Cartagena at Karibana

The path to TPC Cartagena at Karibana is marked by burros carting colorful goods, and rain-pummeled potholes that make for creative driving. TPC Sawgrass this isn't. But don't let the hardscrabble first impression fool you. The TPC's latest acquisition is *un paraíso*—a delightfully surreal juxtaposition of Old World and New nestled next to the Caribbean and boasting a back-nine vista of colonial Cartagena's walled old city. The course is a 2013 Nicklaus Design creation, the second licensed TPC property in Latin America and the first on the South American continent. Six man-made lakes lace Karibana's front nine, which is ringed by dense national forest, and a back nine boasts handsome panoramas of the Caribbean. The course eases players into the round with an expansive fairway on the first hole, then dials up the difficulty at hole Nos. 3 and 5, a pair of bunker-laden par 3s. The wind-in-your-face 13th is the most challenging hole, with water lurking on both sides of the fairway and beyond the green, and greenside bunkers that menace approach shots. Currently a semi-private membership club, TPC Cartagena will gain greater exposure when it hosts this month's PGA Tour Web.com event, the Karibana Championship. And in 2016, a five-star, 270-room Conrad hotel by Hilton is scheduled to open; guests will have playing privileges. It's all part of the plan to grow Karibana into a true must-play destination. Coffee is Colombia's chief export; stir in the TPC Cartagena at Karibana and the result is a bold brew. He wasn't a golfer, but the late literary lion Gabriel García Márquez—the master of magical realism—would have surely appreciated a place that's both magical and wonderfully real.



The 13th hole at Cartagena will give fans of Caribbean golf all the Caribbean they can handle.

Ask Travelin' Joe



HE'S BEEN WHERE YOU'RE GOING



Beauty and danger await at the par-5 sixth on Ponte Vedra's Ocean course.

COURTESY PONTE VEDRA INN AND CLUB

Spring Breaks

Hi, Joe:
I'm planning a one-day trip to Georgia with seven friends. We're staying on the east side of Atlanta and want affordable golf nearby. Any recommendations?
Bob Schloegel, via e-mail

Bob, I'll start you at **Stone Mountain** *($32-$69; 770-465-3278, stonemountainpark.com)*, a Marriott-managed facility. Situated 25 minutes east of downtown, next to Georgia's most famous natural landmark and top tourist attraction, Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain Golf Club and its two courses offer in-your-face views of the massive, pale granite outcropping that rises 1,686 feet above sea level and covers 583 acres. Lakemont is a tight, hilly 1989 John LaFoy layout that isn't as demanding as its elder, Robert Trent Jones–designed sibling, the Stonemont, but is more memorable. **Bear's Best Atlanta** *($49-$114; 678-714-2582, bearsbestatlanta.com)* in Suwanee is worth a few extra bucks. Jack Nicklaus took 18 of his favorite designs and replicated them on a rolling wooded tract in the northeast suburbs. Standouts include versions of two legendary, watery par 3s, the 15th at PGA National's Champion course and the 12th at Muirfield Village. **Cherokee Run** *($19-$49.50—Masters Week package is $100; 770-785-7904, cherokeerungolfclub.com)* in Conyers is a 1995 Arnold Palmer creation with outstanding risk/reward par 5s. Finally, try **Ashton Hills** *($32-$47; 770-385-0064, ashtonhillsgc.com)* in Covington. This Desmond Muirhead track 35 miles east of Atlanta is chock-full of Muirhead's fun, freaky holes, such as the par-3 third, its green ringed by flower-petal shaped bunkers.

Dear Joe:
My father and I are planning a golf trip to Florida and we're taking our wives and my 2-year-old son. Could you suggest a great Florida beach resort that our wives would enjoy while we play?
Matthew Seitz, via e-mail

One of my favorites is **Ponte Vedra Inn and Club** *(888-839-9145, pontevedra.com)*, in Ponte Vedra Beach. This 85-year-old, low-key getaway in northeast Florida offers right-out-your-door beach access, two fun courses, a fitness center and terrific restaurants. There's also a children's playground and nursery for your son. If you seek something in south Florida, my pick is **The Breakers** *(888-273-2537, thebreakers.com)* in Palm Beach. It's more expensive but provides loads of family activities and a backyard beach. Outside the front door is The Breakers Ocean course, Florida's oldest, while a longer, stronger Rees Jones course awaits 20 minutes to the west. The Breakers offers childproofing for families with young children—electric outlets are covered, table corners are protected and plastic bags are removed from garbage pails. Finally, for a fantastic value pick, it's hard to beat **Sandestin** *(800-622-1038, sandestin.com)*, in Destin on the Gulf Coast in Northwest Florida. Four fine courses pair with a gorgeous beach and an exhaustive list of family-friendly activities and amenities. ■

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LOW HANDICAPPER
You play well but want to shave those last few strokes off your handicap.

Unplug Yourself from a Plugged Lie

Your approach falls a few agonizing yards short of the green, and your ball plugs in the face of a bunker. What looked like a typical greenside sand shot is now a rescue mission.

The good news? To dislodge the ball and pop it safely onto the green, you get to "break the rules" and hit the shot extra fat—on purpose. What is normally a sin becomes a virtue in this instance. To set up, dig your back foot into the sand—this will anchor your stance—and open the clubface of your most lofted wedge to expose more bounce, or trailing edge. Make a full backswing and slam the clubhead into the sand about two inches behind the ball. Don't be shy—forcefully bury the club into the surface. The sand will shoot almost straight up in the air, carrying the ball softly and gently over the lip and onto the green.

Illustrations by GRAHAM GACHES



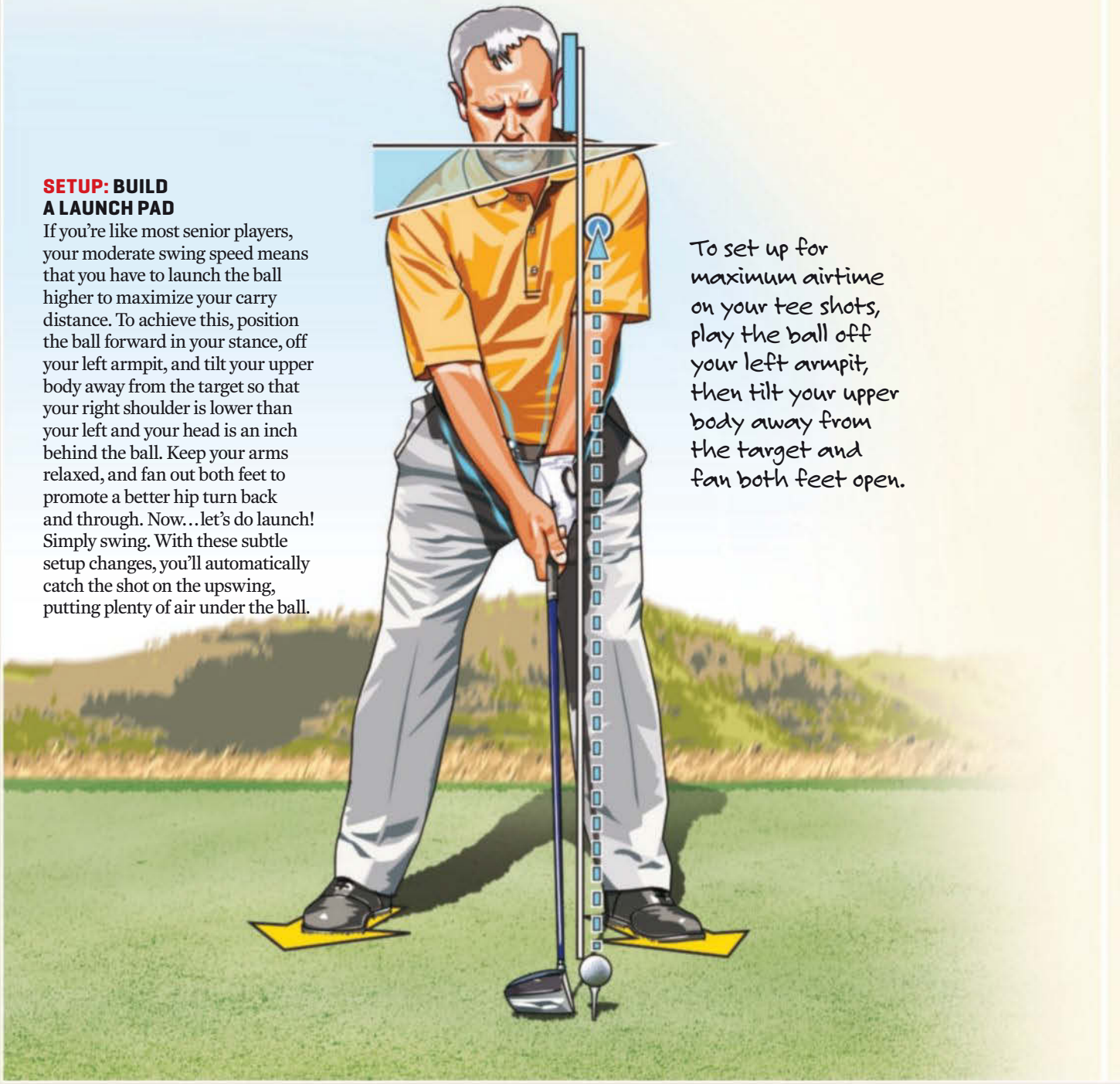
SENIOR PLAYER
You have lost some flexibility and power, but you can still play well.

"Bookend" Your Swing for More Distance

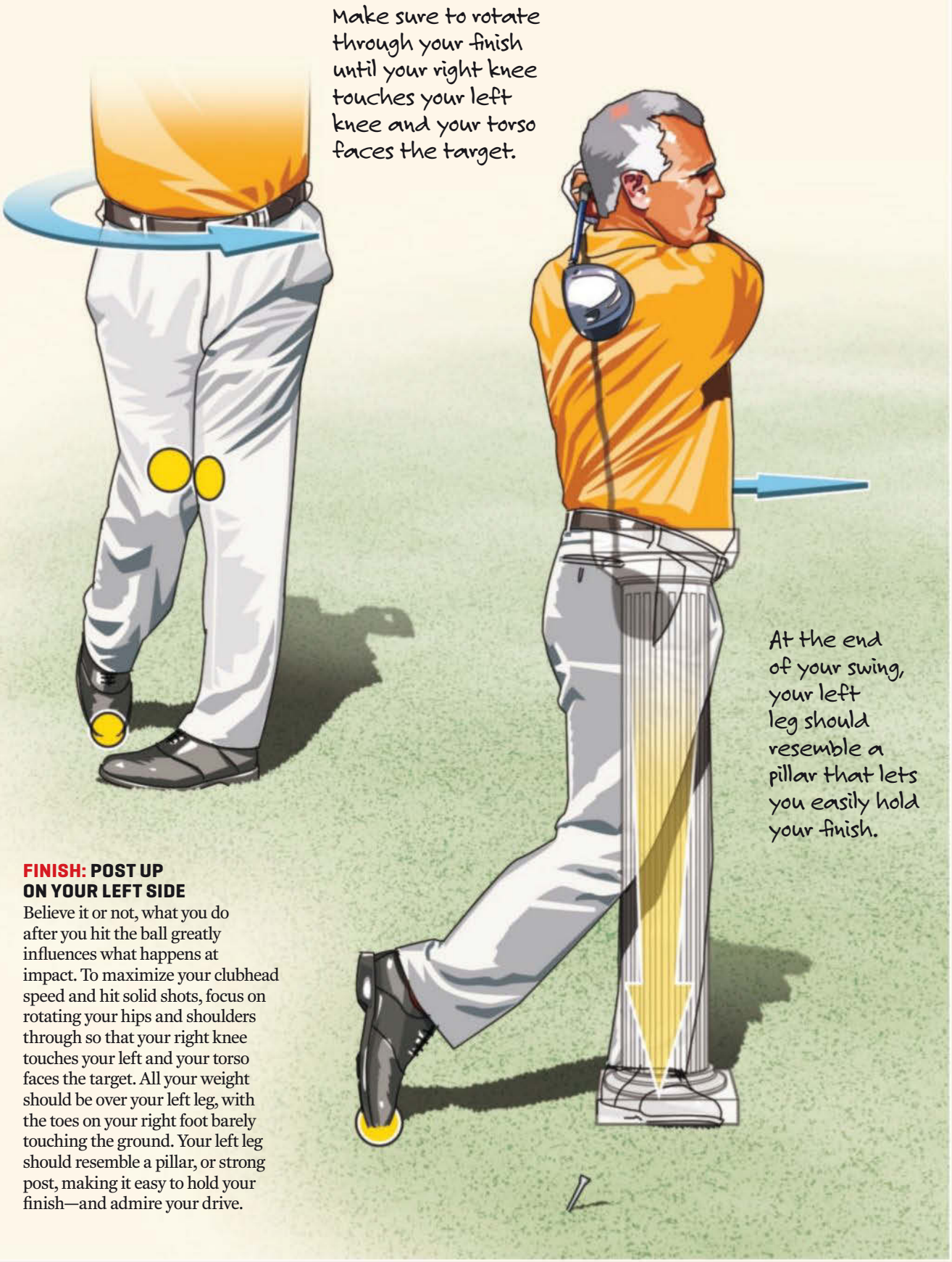
You've tried nearly every swing tip in the book to reclaim the 10 to 15 yards you've lost in recent years—everything from taking the club back wider, to slowing down your tempo, to keeping your back turned to the target longer. But guess what: The solution could rest with the start and finish of your swing, not what happens in between. Few everyday players look for solutions in their setup and finish, but that's where countless flaws can be fixed. Work on your swing's "bookends" and you'll hit the ball farther. Here are some tips for making a smart start and a fantastic finish.

SETUP: BUILD A LAUNCH PAD

If you're like most senior players, your moderate swing speed means that you have to launch the ball higher to maximize your carry distance. To achieve this, position the ball forward in your stance, off your left armpit, and tilt your upper body away from the target so that your right shoulder is lower than your left and your head is an inch behind the ball. Keep your arms relaxed, and fan out both feet to promote a better hip turn back and through. Now…let's do launch! Simply swing. With these subtle setup changes, you'll automatically catch the shot on the upswing, putting plenty of air under the ball.



To set up for maximum airtime on your tee shots, play the ball off your left armpit, then tilt your upper body away from the target and fan both feet open.



FINISH: POST UP ON YOUR LEFT SIDE

Believe it or not, what you do after you hit the ball greatly influences what happens at impact. To maximize your clubhead speed and hit solid shots, focus on rotating your hips and shoulders through so that your right knee touches your left and your torso faces the target. All your weight should be over your left leg, with the toes on your right foot barely touching the ground. Your left leg should resemble a pillar, or strong post, making it easy to hold your finish—and admire your drive.



POWER HITTER
You hit the ball a long way, but your game needs control and consistency.

How to Split the Fairway Every Time

This month at the Masters, you'll watch the world's best tackle one of the most iconic tee shots in golf: the 18th at Augusta National. From the back tees, players must funnel their shots through a narrow chute of tall trees to a fairway in the distance that looks like a speck.

You've probably experienced tight driving holes not unlike the finisher at Augusta—tee shots with zero margin for error, with trees that seem to close in around you. Never fear. Here's how to hit it straight and find even the smallest ribbon of fairway.

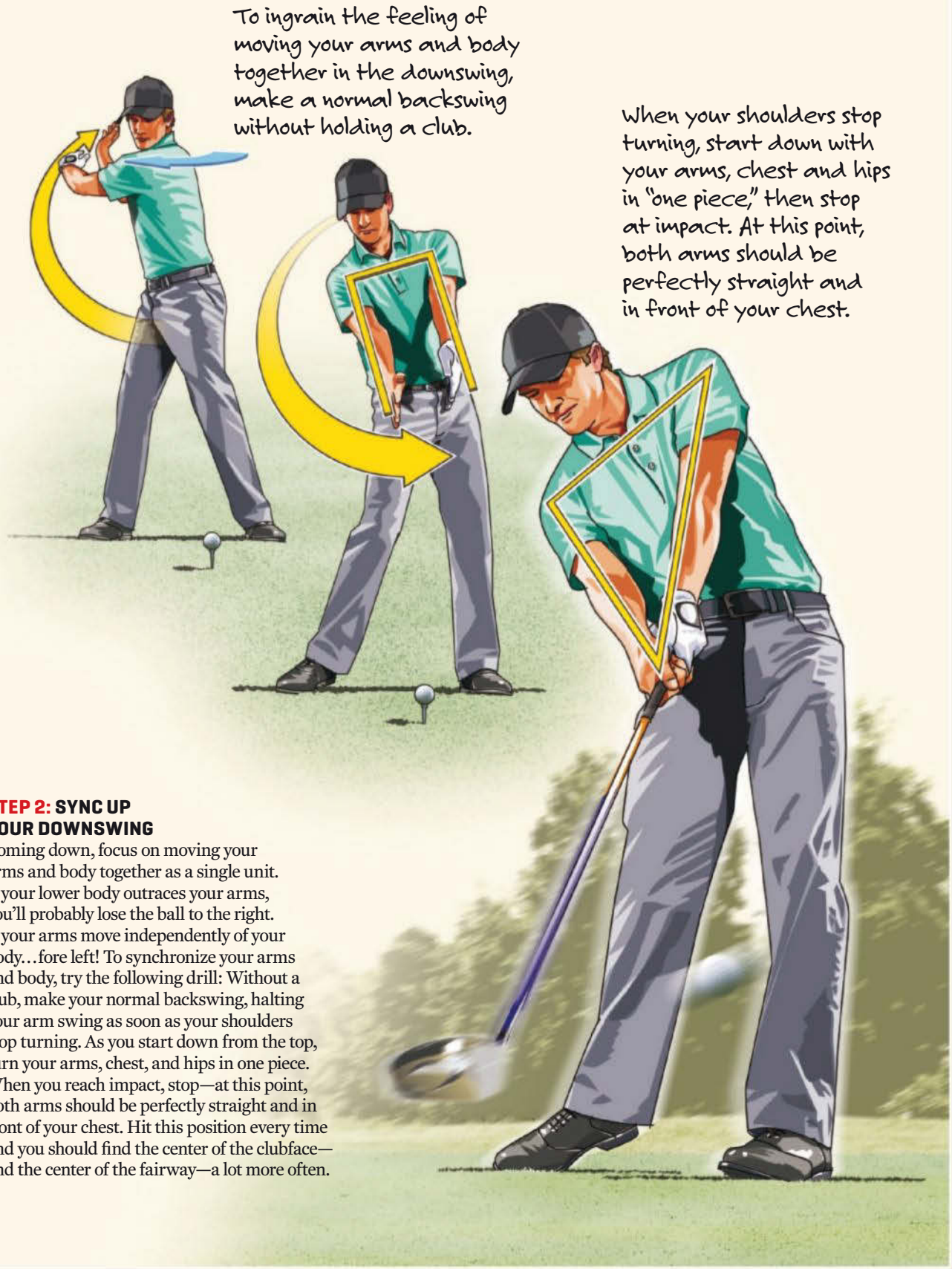
The drive at Augusta's closing hole is a tough test, even for the world's most accurate ballstrikers.

These moves shorten your backswing, which is a key to accuracy.

To improve your own accuracy, maintain the angle in your right leg and keep your hands as far away from your head as possible during your takeaway.

STEP 1: TIGHTEN YOUR BACKSWING

Start the club back very deliberately, moving your arms, club and body back together. As you swing to the top, maintain the angle in your right leg, rotating your right hip pocket straight back. Most importantly, keep your hands as far away from your head as possible. This keeps the club short of parallel at the top, making it much easier to return the clubface to square at impact. The shorter and tighter your backswing, the more accurate your tee shots will be.



STEP 2: SYNC UP YOUR DOWNSWING

Coming down, focus on moving your arms and body together as a single unit. If your lower body outraces your arms, you'll probably lose the ball to the right. If your arms move independently of your body…fore left! To synchronize your arms and body, try the following drill: Without a club, make your normal backswing, halting your arm swing as soon as your shoulders stop turning. As you start down from the top, turn your arms, chest, and hips in one piece. When you reach impact, stop—at this point, both arms should be perfectly straight and in front of your chest. Hit this position every time and you should find the center of the clubface—and the center of the fairway—a lot more often.

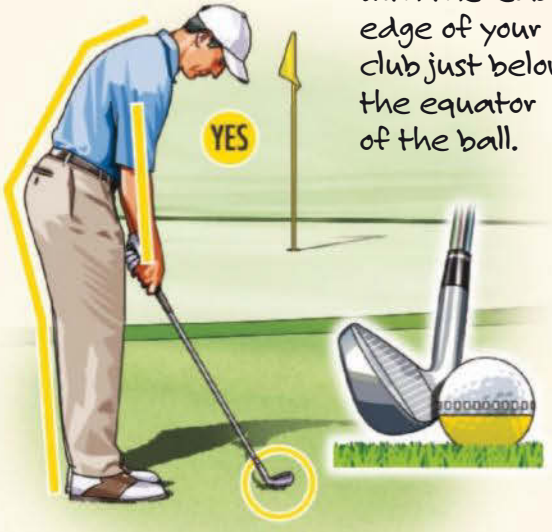
HIGH HANDICAPPER
You have potential but must solve some fundamental problems.

Bid Farewell to Bladed Chips

How many times have you started with two solid shots on a par 4 or par 5, only to make a mess of the hole by blading or shanking your chip? Don't let it get you down. Not only is this a common occurrence among weekend players, but even the best golfers in the world implode around the greens from time to time. Look at Tiger Woods, who's battled a severe case of the chipping yips in recent months—even using his putter on shots he normally would chip. The trick on chips and short pitches is to nip these disaster shots in the bud before they get out of hand. Here's how.



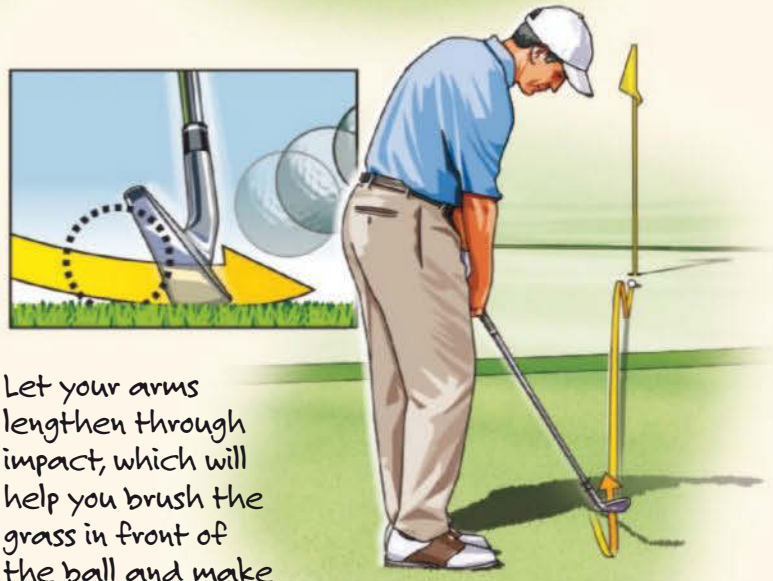
Hunching over at address can make you shorten your arms, resulting in bladed chip shots.



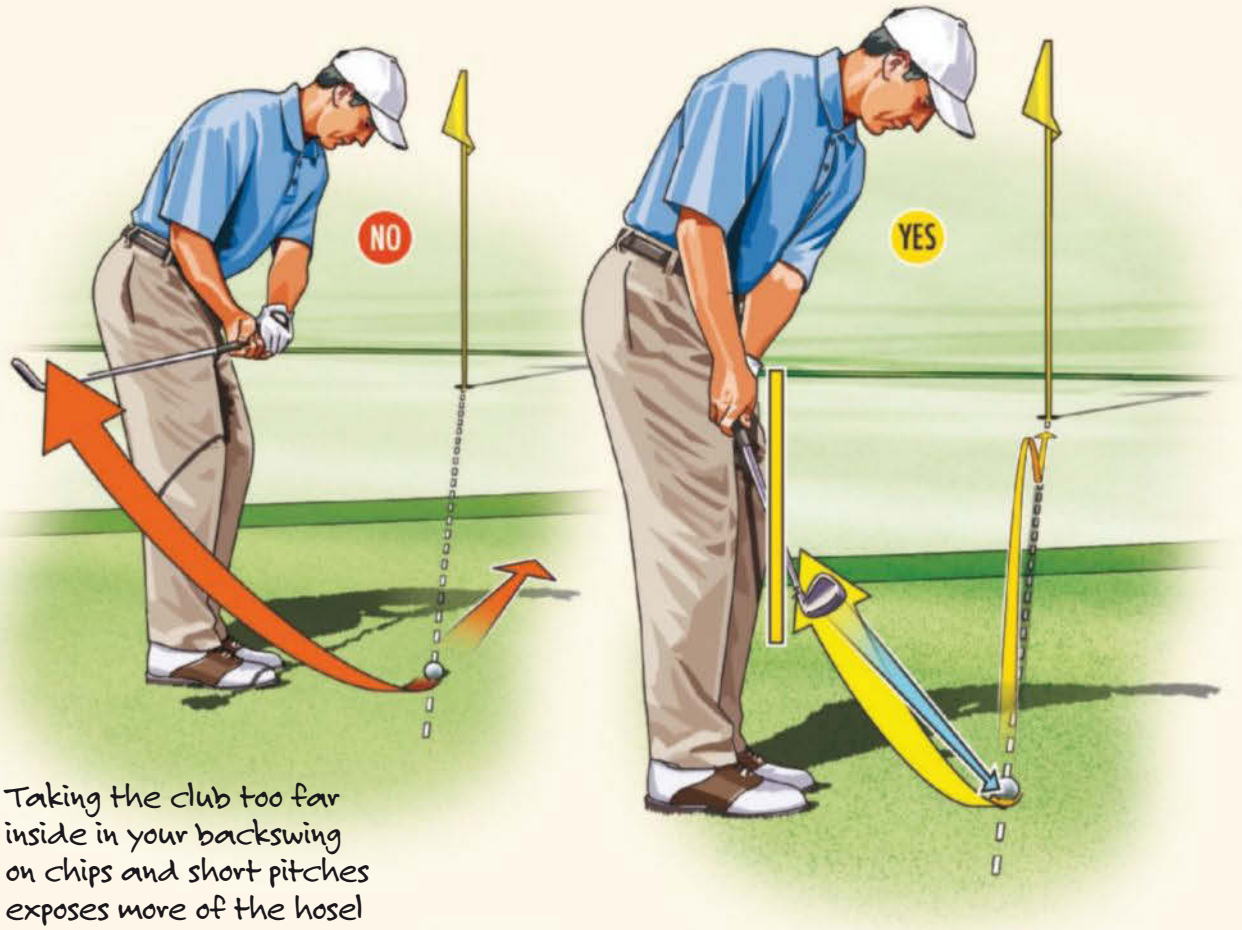
Stand taller at the start, with the leading edge of your club just below the equator of the ball.

BLADED CHIP: STAND TALL

If you blade a lot of chips, stand taller at address so that you literally reach for the ball at impact. With the shorter clubs used for chipping, it's easy to get hunched over the ball at address. This bends (and effectively shortens) your arms through impact, leading to thin strikes. Address the ball with the leading edge of the club just below the equator of the ball, then let your arms lengthen through the strike. Done properly, you'll brush the grass in front of the ball and make crisp contact.



Let your arms lengthen through impact, which will help you brush the grass in front of the ball and make clean contact.



Taking the club too far inside in your backswing on chips and short pitches exposes more of the hosel to the ball, increasing the chances of a shank.

SHANKED CHIP: TAKE IT OUTSIDE

One of the biggest full-swing faults—whipping the clubhead to the inside on the takeaway—is the leading cause of the dreaded shank. It brings the hosel more into play at impact, producing that awful low squirter to the right. To shank-proof your swing, point the clubface at the ball, and keep the clubhead "outside your hands" (top right) for the first few feet of the takeaway. This keeps the clubhead on plane. Maintain a light grip pressure throughout. Practice chipping with just your thumbs and forefingers on the club to produce the perfect amount of pressure and face control.



Instead, keep the clubface pointed at the ball for the first few feet of your takeaway...

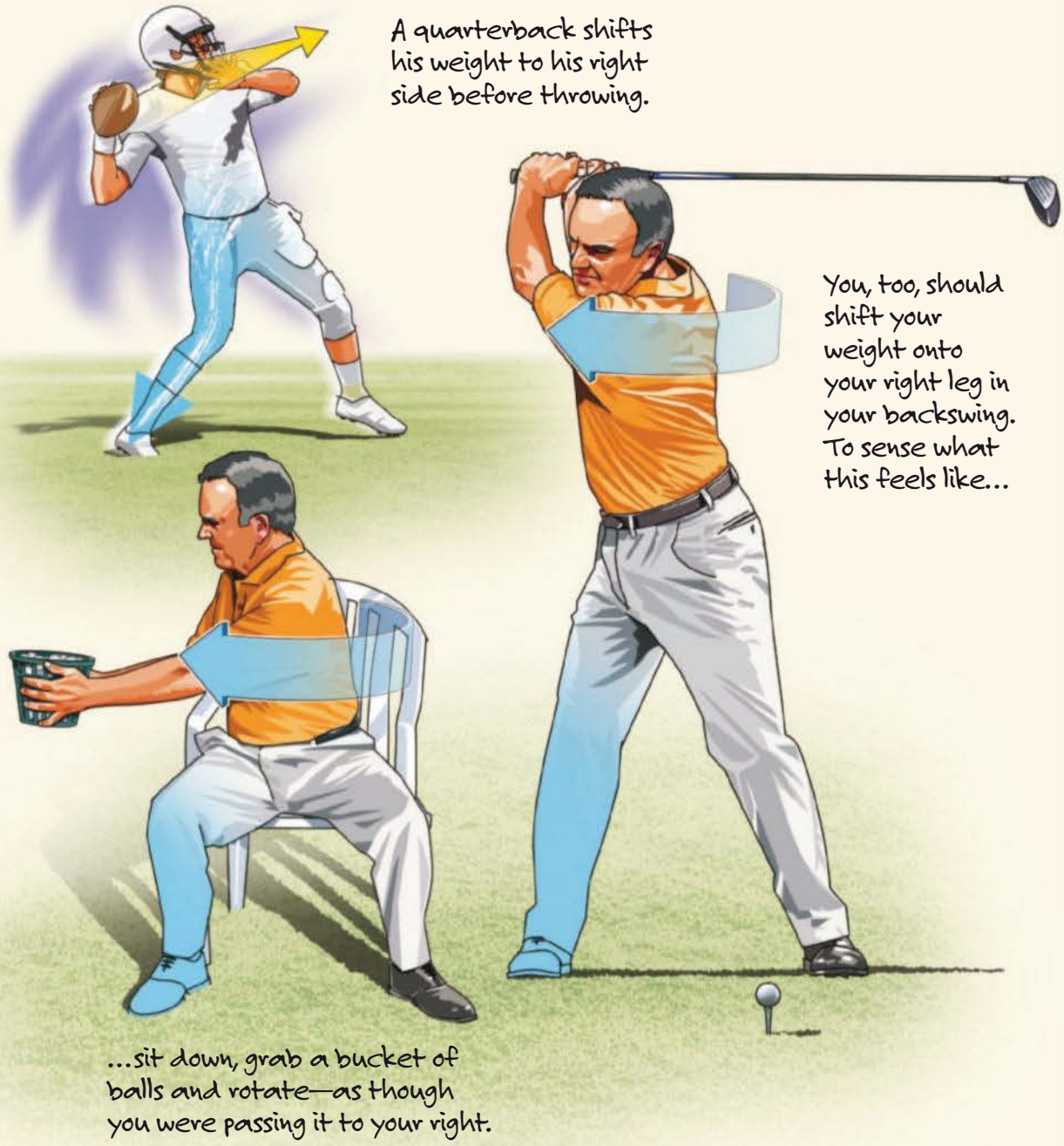
...and maintain light grip pressure. You can practice chipping with only your thumbs and forefingers on the club.

STRAIGHT HITTER
You keep the ball in play, but a lack of distance puts pressure on your game.

Lean on Your Right Side for More Power

When a quarterback prepares to fling the ball far downfield, he first shifts his weight onto his right side and leans his weight into his right leg. That helps him drive off his right foot and propel his momentum forward so he can put more mustard on his throw. Golfers need the same balanced weight shift to hit big, powerful drives down the fairway.

To groove the proper weight shift, grab a bucket of range balls, sit in a chair, and lean slightly forward—as you would in your normal address position. Then turn to the right, as if you were handing the bucket to someone beside you. Your head, shoulders, and torso should all rotate away from the target together, while your lower body remains still. Repeat this several times, then re-create the same feeling in your actual backswing. You'll feel your weight collect over your right leg while your shoulders turn to the top, storing momentum and power that you can unleash in your downswing.




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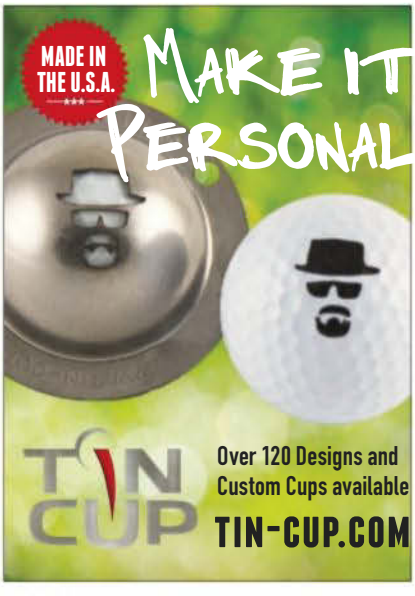


















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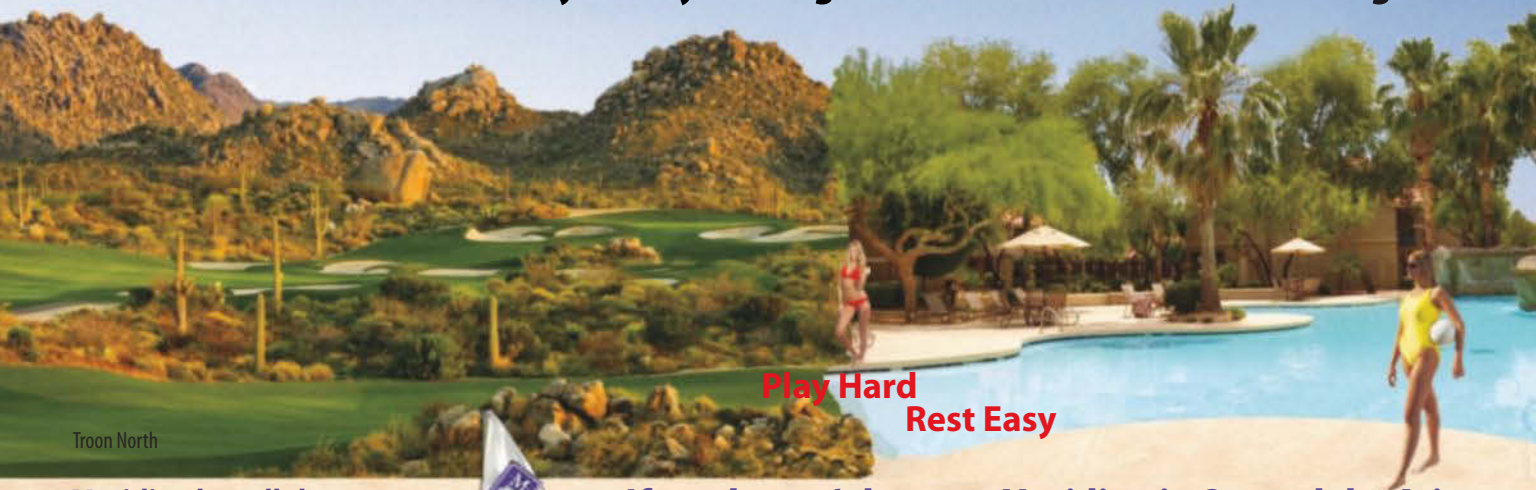


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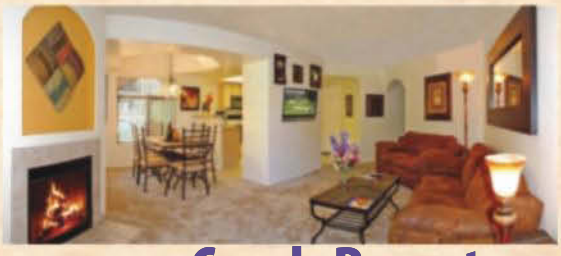


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THE MEANING OF TIGER

WHEN TIGER WOODS was 14, he gave maybe his most interesting interview ever, to *Trans World Sport*, a TV program produced by IMG. It was recorded in November 1990, around the time his father, Earl, started a paying gig as a talent scout with the sports marketing company. In it, Tiger shows astonishing maturity, although at times you don't know if he's answering as himself or as a stand-in for Earl.

Tiger—sitting in a golf cart, a retainer on his upper row—is asked about being a black kid in a white man's game. How often does he face racism?

"Every day," Tiger says. "Not every day, but every time I go to a major country club. You can always feel it. You can always sense it. 'What are you doing here? You shouldn't be here.'"

Tiger is asked how he might influence the game. The interviewer mentions Jack Nicklaus. Tiger says, "Since I'm black, I might even be bigger than him—to the blacks."

I thought of that interview when Woods, at his lost-tooth press conference in January, made a quick and amusing reference to the lack of "brown dudes at ski races." How often do you hear Woods voluntarily bring up race? Never. But it's on his mind. It has to be. Because he's a brown dude living in a country that has proven itself incapable of turning a blind eye toward race.

Some people who knew Earl say he was a racist. My guess is that it's more complicated. He was born in 1932, three years after Martin Luther King, and grew up in a segregated country many of us know only from John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me*. The long father-son hug when Woods won his first Masters at 21, by 12 shots, was partly rooted in an emotion only the oppressed would truly understand: *We showed them*.

Augusta's troubled history with race is a tired subject, and in recent years the club has, in ways, reinvented itself. That history could not be a motivator for Woods anymore. But it once was, and it makes you wonder: To what degree did the racist history of *golf* in America motivate Earl when he was raising Tiger in the game? The stakes were impossibly high. Earl was raising a son engineered to beat the world first and change it later.

Years ago, Tiger Woods declared he was playing for more than just himself. It's a shame that's not still true today.



No old-timey American golf club, its clubhouse walls lined with portraits of long-dead mustachioed presidents, plays a role in Woods's fantasy life. Ben Crenshaw can get choked up talking about Chicago Golf Club. Tiger's not built for that. He's happy to play 36 at Medalist in South Florida in a cart, but he's in no rush to play two with club caddies at Baltusrol.

He's won his three U.S. Opens on public courses: Pebble Beach in 2000, Bethpage in 2002 and Torrey Pines in 2008. To me, Woods was making a statement with those wins in our national open. He was taking a stand for public golf. Yes, I'm saying that the venues themselves provided extra motivation on a subliminal level Woods himself could likely not identify. You're welcome to call me crazy.

I was at Woods's second of three U.S. Amateur wins, at Newport (R.I.) Country Club in 1995, when the grand old lady was already north of 100. I was struck by how ungracious Woods was at the closing ceremony, barely nodding to the club or the USGA or to Buddy Marucci, the man he had just defeated. I was probably expecting too much from a rising sophomore at Stanford and was too wedded to the example set by Nicklaus, so graceful in victory and defeat. Big Jack took his cues from Bobby Jones, who has come down to us as the very figure of gentility—the great Robert Tyre Jones, who created Augusta National in his own image.

At the 1995 Am, when it was all over but the shouting, Earl stood with a small group nearby, raised his son's trophy up high and said, "This is for you, Bobby Jones. I hope you're rolling over in your grave, that it's going to a black man's home for another year." It was a crass but effective illustration of *We showed them*.

At the end of the *Trans World Sport* interview, Tiger was asked what one tournament he most wants to win and why. "The Masters," the teenager says. "[For] the way blacks have been treated there. If I win that tournament, that would be really big for us."

The 2009 stiletto parade and all that followed changed Woods. How could it not? He started playing, as Hank Haney quotes Woods saying in his book, "only for myself." That's the ultimate swing thought, really. *Why are you even playing?*

Tiger's golf was better and more meaningful when he was playing for a greater cause. But that was then, and it is what it is. —*Michael Bamberger*

ILLUSTRATION: KEITH WITMER



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